

## Chapter III

### Profile of Patni Community in Cachar District of Assam

In previous chapter, I discussed framework of study and review of literature. This chapter deals with profile of Patni community in Cachar district of Assam. Patni community in pre-history, history and contemporary society is discussed in this chapter too.

#### HISTORICAL PROFILE OF PATNI

Patni community is originally known as *Patauni*, *Nadial* and (*Adi Mahishya*). Traditional occupation of Patni community was boating and fishing<sup>1</sup>. But gradually over period of time, may be owing to compulsive situation created within or imposed upon them from outside, they switched over to cultivation and took fishing as secondary occupation. Patni claims to be offspring of *Madhava Patni* who ferried Rama Chandra of *Ramayan* across Ganges. According to history Patni is referred as *Samudraputra* or *Gangaputra*<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup>K.S.Singh, People of India National Series Volume IV, India's Communities, N-Z, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, Pp 2823-24

<sup>2</sup>Bhakta Das, A Glimpage of The Scheduled Caste and Their Socio-Economic Development in Assam, Omsons Publications, Guwahati, 1986, Pp 36-37

In *Mahabharata*, it is found that, Satyabati, mother of Byashdeb was a woman from boating community. Satyabati's two sons Chitrangada and Bichitrabirya became emperors of whole Bharat or India. It can be said that *Kaurava* and *Pandhava*, the great warriors of Mahabharata era had relationship with parental kins of Satyabati<sup>3</sup>.

In *Tretayuga*, lord Rama was helped by Patni boatmen to cross river Ganga on his way to Mithila. Lord Rama, his brother Lakshmana and Viswamitra went to Mithila for breaking the great bow *Haradhanu*. To cross river Ganga they requested boatman to help them. Boatman found that whatever lord Rama touched turned out to become pearl. Simple minded boatman could not understand value of pearl rather he was fearful for losing his boat if it is touched by lord Rama. So he washed feet of Rama and took him in his boat<sup>4</sup>.

In *Annadamangal Kabya*, poet Bharat Chandra Roy cites simplicity of Ishawari Patni who ferried goddess Annapurna. To narrate simplicity and devotion of Patni to god and goddess poet mentions that after crossing river when goddess Annapurna asked Ishawari to seek blessings from her,

---

<sup>3</sup>Subodh Chandra Majumdar, Kashiram Mahabharata, Dev Sahitya Kuthir Pvt Ltd, Kolkata, 1976, Pp 81-85

<sup>4</sup>Birendra Krishna Bhadra, *Krittibasi Ramayana*, Mandal and Sons, Calcutta, 1983, Pp 111

Ishwari sought a very simple blessing to goddess instead of worthy blessing. Ishwari prayed to goddess Annapurna that her offspring may be blessed with simple food *dudhbhat* (milk and rice) to her offspring to lead a simple life<sup>5</sup>.

In *Padmapuran Kabya*, it is found that chief captain of marchant *Chandradhara* or *Chand Sadagar* were *Dulai* and *Kulai* who belonged to boatman or Patni community. In the literature a Patni or boatman is addressed as *Dum* and his wife as *Dumuni*<sup>6</sup>.

According to Lakshmi Mohan Das (1996), Patni lived in *Jaldhup* region of undivided Bangladesh, who initially came from Patna of Bihar approximately on or before sixteenth century. At that time Patna was a renowned centre for trade and commerce. It is said that eleven merchants from Patna came to Sylhet of Bangladesh via river *Meghna* in summer season for commerce. One night on their way to next location they faced tremendous storm in the midst of river. Their boats were flown and drown away and all of them could not save their live except few boatmen. These boatmen waited for a long time, but no merchant returned to Sylhet for

---

<sup>5</sup>Tarun Mukhapadhyay, *Bharat Chandrer Annadamangal*, Deys Publishing, Calcutta, 2003, Pp 154-156

<sup>6</sup>Chaitnya Charan Paul, *Padmapuran Sangraha*, Sribani Printing Company, Calcutta, 1990, Pp 19-25 and 183

months together. At last, by looking their miserable condition, one benevolent person gave them shelter and helped those young boatmen to settle in the Sylhet region. They settle down in the region without any option and alternative. But in due course of their life they faced trouble in many ways. As those Patni young men were unmarried, they found difficulty to marry. May be their displacement, linguistic dissimilarity and low grade occupation forced them to marry bride of lower castes and to live on fishing and boating in Jaldhup region of Sylhet in Bangladesh<sup>7</sup>.

Due to increase in population and unfavourable living condition in Jaldhup region of Bangladesh, Patni gradually started to spread over east part of Sylhet like Karimgang, Badarpur and Bhanga. Many Patni people settled in Cachar and Jayantia kingdom approximately in late eighteenth or beginning of nineteenth century. A good number of Patni also migrated to Jiribam of Manipur around twentieth century<sup>8</sup>.

During regime of Muslim rulers of Bangladesh and even during British period, migration of Patni from Jaldhup of Bangladesh to neighbouring region was not rapid. After partition of India, Bangladesh became part of Pakistan, but bulk of Patni migrated to Assam. At that time Patni along

---

<sup>7</sup>Lakshmi Mohan Das, Patni Janagoshtir Ruprekha, Srimati Niyati Das, Lumding, 1996, Pp 1-15

<sup>8</sup>Ibid Pp 16-18

with other Hindus became victim of partition. Post partition riot in Bangladesh made many Patni rootless. They left their house, land and property in Bangladesh and took shelter in refugee camps in different areas in Assam. Many Patni settled in Brahmaputra valley of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh from refugee camps of Mahishashan and Lakhipur. Some of them settled in Tripura too<sup>9</sup>.

Patni settled in Cachar kingdom in late eighteenth or early nineteenth century mostly in river banks, started agriculture by cleaning unused land of river basin.

### **SOCIO-CULTURAL PROFILE**

Social status of Patni in Cachar during British period was inferior. They were not allowed to enter to house of high caste Hindus. They were discriminated due to their ritual impurity. Initially Patni had no priest and barber to serve them. Though some liberal priests agreed later on to serve them but they were isolated by their own society<sup>10</sup>.

Patni of Cachar district claim them as *kshatriya Mahishya*. They view that their traditional occupation is not boating but agriculture. During period of

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid Pp 16-19

<sup>10</sup>Ibid Pp 20-45

King Ballal Sen of Bengal Mahishya were excluded from Hindu society. That was root cause of their social degradation. At that time King Ballal Sen accepted Jalik Kaibarta but Halik Kaibartas or Mahishya were forcefully degraded and their social status was intentionally considered as same as *Harhi*, *Muchi* and *Dum* like other untouchables<sup>11</sup>.

Mahishya of Bengal claims that they are descendents of Mahisman, a king of Chandra dynasty. The name Mahishya has come from name of king Mahishman. Another king of Chandra dynasty was Bali who had five sons namely Anga, Banga, Kalinga, Sukshma and Pundra. King Bali distributed his kingdom among his five sons. New kingdoms were renamed according to names of kings like Angadesh, Kalingadesh, Poundradesh etc. Poundradesh was later known as Gaurh. Bengal was formed by large Bangadesh and some parts of Anga, Kalinga, Poundra and Sukshma. King Kalinga was the most powerful ruler and later on according to his name Mahishya was known as kalinga. Renowned Mahishya king was *Kirtibirjarjun* and during his time Mahishya were engaged in agriculture

---

<sup>11</sup>Bimal J Deb and Dilip Kumar Lahiri, Cosmogony of Caste and Social Mobility in Assam, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1984, Pp 46-51

and trade. Megasthinese found Mahishya engaged in royal activity, agriculture and trade<sup>12</sup>.

In Cachar, some Patni maintained relationship with Doloï family of Hailakandi, which was known as founder of Chandra Kula Das of Cachar. Famous Das Laskar family of Fulbari had genealogical link with Doloï family. Das Laskar family had political consciousness from British period. Haridas Alias Haridas Goswam, grandfather of Nibaran Chandra Laskar (M.L.A.) was leader of anti-British Cacharis, whose name was mentioned in British record as notorious Haridas. After independence his descendents represented Cachar by holding various political posts at state and national level<sup>13</sup>.

In **beginning of twentieth century** Patni of Cachar formed a social organisation in name of Mahishya Samaj Sanjibani Samiti with a view to uplift their social status. Rai Bahadur Agornath Adhikari Vidyabhushan was president of the organisation. First successful meeting of Mahishya Samaj Sanjibani Samiti was held in village Dulalgram in house of Latu

---

<sup>12</sup>Nirmal Kumar Roy, Rani Rasmanir Jibanbrittanta, Udbodhon Office, Kolkata, 2003, Pp 14-19

<sup>13</sup> Nitish Ranjan Laskar, Backward Communities in Assam: A study of Scheduled Castes (1919-1947) With Special Reference To Surma Valley, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Guwahati University, 1992, Pp 70-78

Ram Biswas. Sri Digendra Narayan Bhattacharjee, a teacher and social reformer, presided over the meeting. Many well wishers of Patni from high caste Hindu attended that meeting. Retired extra assistant commissioner, Sri Mahendra Chandra Dey Choudhury and a member of cachari Hindu royal family, Jojnmejy Barman along with advocate Boroda Baran Chakraborty, advocate Hema Chandra Dutta and Sri Satindra Chandra Deb were present in that meeting. Sri Digendra Narayan Bhattacharjee advised Patni to be sanskritised by using sacred thread. He also advised other community to take water from Patni to eradicate untouchability. As per his advice, in next day of meeting many Patni took sacred thread in presence of him. People from Namasudra, Suklabaidya and Nath who attended that meeting also agreed to accept water from Patni<sup>14</sup>.

Many educated youth of Patni community, who were involved in Mahishya Samaj Sanjibani Samiti, worked to uplift economic, social and educational status of Patni in Cachar. Haraprasad Das, Lakshiram Sikdar, Sailesh Chandra Barbhuyan and others worked hard for betterment of the community. Lakshiram Sikdar and Sailesh Chandra Barbhuyan were appointed as inspectors to oversee progress of education of Patni. They used to visit each and every village and inspired fellow members to send

---

<sup>14</sup>Ibid Pp 70-75



their wards to schools. Money was collected to help poor students. Mahishya Samaj Sanjibani Samiti also looked after health and sanitation of community<sup>15</sup>.

President of Mahishya Samaj Sanjibani Samiti, Rai Bahadur Aghornath Adhikari submitted a memorandum to chief commissioner to change caste name of Patni to Mahishya. Many educated people of Bengal and Assam hold that Patni people are Mahishya by caste. Kamakhya Nath Sharma, Prathama Nath Debsharma, Rajendra Nath Debsharma, Ram Nath Vidyaratana and Mahamahopadhyaya pandits of Calcutta Sanskrit College were of view that Patni of Bengal and Assam are Mahishya by caste. Umamprasad Das of Sylhet was president of Mahishya Hitasadhani sabha who pointed out some questions which concerned origin of Patni in Bengal and Assam. Umamprasad referred views of Prathamnath Tarkabhusan, Rajendranath Vidyabhushan of Government Sanskrit College of Calcutta and Jogindranath Smriti Ratna of Nabadwip Sanskrit Chatus Pathi as high status Patni. Umamprasad further reiterated that Patnis' are *Chasi or Halik Kaivarta*, who used to worship lord Vishnu and their name is already mentioned in Purana. Umamprasad Das's development of awareness led Mahishya movement in Cachar with a view to change status of Patni to

---

<sup>15</sup>Ibid Pp 70-77

Mahishya and to use surname Das. In 1921 Patni people prayed to census superintendent C. S. Mullan to change their surname from Patni to Mahishya and Kshatriya in bracket. Mullan assured them and directed census enumerators to do so but some local census enumerators and officers opposed that. Iswan Chandra Purkayastha, head clerk of census office made a contrary to direction of Mullan for which finally Patni name was not changed to Mahishya in that census period. Despite of protest of higher caste census officials to change title of Patni in census of 1931 Patni is recorded as Das. After independence, government of India included Patni in Scheduled Caste category. In this regard advocate Nitai Ram Patni contributed a lot to include Patni in Scheduled Caste category<sup>16</sup>.

Patni in Cachar during British rule were followers of Baishnavism. Initially Patni had no priest to perform religious ritual. Later on some Brahmin priests agreed to serve Patni. But Brahmin priests who served Patni were partly defiled and regarded low caste Brahmin and also excluded from their own society<sup>17</sup>.

---

<sup>16</sup>Ibid Pp 70-78

<sup>17</sup>Lakshmi Mohan Das, Patni Janagoshtir Ruprekha, Srimati Niyati Das, Lumding, 1996, Pp 1-15.

## **OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE**

Majority of Patni in Cachar were earlier engaged in agriculture as most of them had fairly good number of land. But some Patni liked in boating as their secondary occupation since cultivation output was not meeting their all season requirements. In Cachar district number of river was also less, and accordingly a few Patni, may be owing to compulsive situation or location of their habitation, took boating as primary occupation too. Likewise hardly any Patni found engaged in trade and commerce. Patni also involved in clearing unused land of river side, forest and plain land to cultivate produce of their choice mainly paddy and became partially self sufficient in the district. Fishing was rather not a chief source of livelihood of them but they used to cash fish for consumption on the other hand too<sup>18</sup>.

## **EDUCATIONAL PROFILE**

In Pre-British period most of the Patnis were illiterate. During British period many of them became interested in education. When government high school and normal schools were established in Silchar town, many Patni students showed interest to receive English education. But those Patni students could not proceed further to get high and higher technical education like higher caste students. Those who could somehow received

---

<sup>18</sup>Ibid Pp 15-55

English education got job as primary or middle school teacher and also low grade employee in land settlement office in different parts of the district. Later on when primary schools were established Patni boys and girls, living in villages, got chance to study at primary level. Due to large number of Patni developed interest in education, some like-minded or established persons of the community donated land to establish schools around vicinity of their habitation too<sup>19</sup>.

## **CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT IN PATNI COMMUNITY**

### **Socio-economic profile**

Unlike other districts or area in northeast, Patni community is fairly found in good number in Cachar district of Assam. Patni of Cachar district as well as other parts of the region has long tradition of backwardness, poverty, destitution, illiteracy and exploitation. After independence when government of centre and state took various initiatives to uplift condition of Scheduled Castes; Patni community should have received some kind of benefit to improve their socio-economic condition. Subsequent discussion in the chapter may make usher in about this.

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid Pp 20-65

With a view to highlight profile of Patni in Cachar district following data are analysed and interpreted about their total population, income, occupation, educational status, housing pattern, agricultural land possession pattern, source of drinking water etc. Their ecological profile and socio-cultural profile are also narrated in last part of the chapter.

**Table III.1**

**Sex Wise Distribution of Patni Population in 1971**

<b>Name of Police Station</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Literate</b>	<b>Illiterate</b>
Katigora	11,015	5,712	5,303	3,104	7,911
Sonai	12,890	6,521	6,369	4,924	7,966
Silchar	13,676	6,995	6,681	5,385	8,291
Udharband	242	129	113	121	121
Barakhola	2,294	1,147	1,147	1,095	1,199
Lakhipur	1,906	963	943	621	1,285
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,023</b>	<b>21,467</b>	<b>20,556</b>	<b>15,250</b>	<b>26,773</b>

Source: Statistical Handbook, Assam, 2008

As per 1971 census total Scheduled Caste population of undivided Cachar district was 2,08,867 out of which total Patni population was 78,433. In Silchar sub-division of undivided Cachar, Patni population was 42,023,

which was 20% of total Scheduled Caste population of the district. Out of total Patni population of Silchar sub-division male population was 21,467 and female population was 20,556.

**Table III.2**

**Estimated Present Patni Population in Cachar**

Name of LA Constituency	No of Patni Villages	No of Patni Households	Population		Total Population
			Male	Female	
Silchar	11	1655	5003	4905	9908
Sonai	15	2105	6407	6005	12412
Dhalai	22	2740	8640	7992	16632
Katigora	28	3487	10616	10089	20705
Barakhola	13	2036	6510	5955	12465
Lakhipur	11	805	2377	2210	4587
Udharband	7	545	1816	1690	3506
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>13373</b>	<b>39346</b>	<b>37156</b>	<b>80215</b>

In Cachar district Patni community concentrates in 80 (eighty) villages and also they are in good number in other 27 (twenty seven) villages. Majority of Patni are found in Dhalai, Sonai, Silchar, Katigora and Barakhola legislative assembly constituencies. Barak Valley Patni Parishad, a social

organisation of Patni, established in year 1994, states Patni are concentrated in selective villages of Cachar District.

Patni live in Palonghat, Zamalpar, Dhalai Bazar, Devipur, Mahadevpur, Saptagram, Ganganagar, Bhuvan Khal, Khalakhal, Krishnapur, Gojalghat, Dulalgram, Rammanikpur, Kashirtal, Mohankhal, Sadagram and Jibangram of Dholai assembly constituency. In Sonai assembly constituency Patni are concentrated in following villages viz Tulagram, Amjurpar, Chelurpar, Patkurala, Votergram, Kachudaram, Sabazpur, Krishnapur, Dhanipur, Kaptanpur, Dekajurai, Ghargharipar, Gajaripar, Dudpathil, Basertal, Swadhinbazar and Mohanpur.

In Katigora constituency Patni are living in villages 24 (twenty four) villages like, Sadhirkal, Subodhnagar, Sundaura, Hilara, Seuti, Kinnakhal, Jabda, Karaikhandi, Lathimara, Haritikhar, Siddeswar, Siddipur, Gobindapur, Najatpur, Madarpur, Burunga, Sripur, Ganirgram, Fulbari, Singjuripar, Mahadebpur, Ghumra, Kalain, Digarkhal.

In Silchar assembly constituency Patni live in Rantibasti, Chandrapur, Noaraj, Bhudhurail, Atalbasthi, Chengkhuri and Silchar town. In Barakhola assembly Patni reside in Nij Jaynagar, Nayagram, Chengurpar, Jaintapuri,

Kandigram, Ghagrapar, Shalchapra, Machughat, Dudhpathil, Choto Dudhpatil, Chandrapur, Buribail, Manikpur, Srinagar and Srikona.

Apart from these villages there are many other villages of Cachar district where Patni are not concentrated but found residing along with other castes and communities. Approximately twenty seven such villages in different legislative assembly constituencies of Cachar district are reported by members of Barak Valley Patni Parishad.

By collection of data from members of Barak Valley Patni Parishad, who are representing their respective villages in organisation as well as from village ward member, an estimated population of Patni community in Cachar district is prepared and presented in table III.2. From the above table it is observed that total estimated number of households of Patni community in Cachar District of Assam is 13,373. Total Patni population in Cachar district is 80,215, out of which 39,346 are male and 37,156 are female. It is further found majority of Patni in Cachar district are living in Katigora legislative assembly constituency followed by Dhalai, Barakhola, Sonai, Silchar, Lakhipur and Udharband legislative assembly constituencies. In Katigora total Patni population is 20,705 followed by 16,632 in Dhalai, 12,465 in Barakhola, 12,416 in Sonai, 9,908 in Silchar,



4,587 in Lakhipur and 3,506 in Udharband respectively. In Silchar town Patni are settled in Tikarbasti (nearby Ambikapatti), Kanakpur, Meherpur, Malugram and scattered in other parts of the town. Educated and financially sound people of the community of Barak valley are settled in Silchar town.

**Table III.3**

**Economic Profile of Patni in Cachar District**

<b>Range of Income</b>	<b>No of Household</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Up to Rs 2000	8548	64%
Rs 2001- 4000	1764	13%
Rs 4001-6000	788	6%
Rs 6001-8000	698	5.20%
Rs 8001-10,000	627	4.70%
Rs 10,000 above	948	7.10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13373</b>	<b>100%</b>

From table no. III.3 it is observed that around 77% of total Patni households' monthly income is below Rs. 4000 out of which 64% people have monthly income of less than Rs. 2000. Monthly income of 6% people ranges from Rs4001 to 6000. Monthly income of around 9.9% households ranges from Rs 6001 to 10,000 and only 7.10% households are having

monthly income above Rs 10,000. Patni whose monthly income is more than Rs 10,000 are either work in government and private sector or middle class farmer who have more than one source of income. Very few Patni are engaged in business in town and village.

**Table III.4**

**Occupational Profile of Patni in Cachar District**

<b>Occupational Category</b>	<b>Number of Household</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Day Labourer	3480	26%
Carpenter	2243	16.80%
Mason	1170	8.70%
Helper of mason	1400	10.50%
Middle farmer	800	6%
Small Farmer	1775	13.30%
Fisherman	230	1.70%
Govt. servant	700	5.20%
Pvt. Job	1108	8.30%
Businessman	112	0.80%
Others	355	2.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13373</b>	<b>100%</b>

Above table reveals 26% of Patni households are engaged as day labourer followed by 16.80% as carpenter, 8.70% are mason, 10.50% are helper of mason, 6% are middle farmer and 13.30% are small farmer. Only 1.70% of total Patni household are engaged in traditional occupation of fishing and selling of fish. On the other hand 5.20% Patni household have members

serve in government office. But 8.80% household members serve in private sector. A few Patni families are engaged in business and those who are engaged in business they deal with mainly grocery shop and sale of vegetable. Limited number of people of the community are engaged in other kinds of work including driving, rickshaw pulling etc.

**Table III.5**

**Educational Profile of Patni in Cachar District**

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>No of People</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Illiterate	3200	4%
Up to Lower Primary	19,620	24.50%
Up to Middle School	19315	24.10%
Up to Class IX	18280	22.80%
High School Passed	11120	13.90%
Higher Secondary Passed	6045	7.50%
Graduation	2035	2.50%
Post Graduation	600	0.70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80,215</b>	<b>100%</b>

Above table focuses 4% of total Patni population is still illiterate. Those who are literate, 24.50% got primary school education, 24.10% received education up to middle school and another 22.80% received education up

to class IX. Further only 13.90% Patni passed high school leaving certificate (HSLC) and 7.50% passed higher secondary school examination. Again 2.5% of Patni completed graduation and very negligible percentage (0.70%) received education up to post-graduation and more.

**Table III.6**

**Age Wise Distribution of Patni Population**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>No of People</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Below 1 year	1115	1.50%
1to 15 year	19,130	23.70%
16-30 years	21,170	26.40%
31-50 years	21,988	27.40%
51-65 years	16,008	20%
Above 65 years	804	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80,215</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table represents age wise distribution of population of the community. Mere 1.5% of total Patni population belongs to age group less than one year, 23.70% belongs to age group 1 year to 15 years, 27.40% belongs to age group 31 years to 50 years and 20% belongs to age group 51 years to 65 years. Very few of them (1%) are there who accede age of sixty years.

**Table III.7**

**Housing Pattern of Patni in Cachar District**

<b>Type of House</b>	<b>No of Household</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Chawal with bamboo wall	1573	11.80%
Tin with bamboo wall	5872	43.90%
Tin with mud walls	512	3.80%
Tin with timber & bamboo	616	4.60%
Tin with concrete wall	4077	30.50%
Tiled with concrete wall	723	5.40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13373</b>	<b>100%</b>

Housing pattern of Patni people in Cachar district of Assam is shown in table III.7. It is found that majority of people ( 43.90%) live in house made up of tin with bamboo walls followed by 30.50% in house made up of tin with concrete walls and 11.80% in house made up of chawal with bamboo walls. Out of remaining population 4.60% lives in houses made up of tin with timber and bamboo and 3.80% lives in tin with mud walls. Only 5.40% of total population lives in house made up of concrete walls and tiled roof.



House of a day labourer which made up of tin and bamboo wall. Majority of the houses of Patni community are of the same type.



A Lady carrying water from river. During dry season Patni people face scarcity of water and they carry usable water from distant places.

**Table III.8**

**Agricultural land Possession Pattern of Patni**

<b>Amount of Land</b>	<b>Number of Household</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Landless	4050	30.30%
0-0.5 acre	3437	25.70%
0.5-1 acre	3313	24.80%
1-1.5 acre	1162	8.70%
1.5- 2 acre	803	6%
Above 2 acres	608	4.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13373</b>	<b>100%</b>

Land possession pattern of Patni in Cachar District of Assam is shown in table III.8. It is found that 30.30% Patni people in Cachar district is landless. Majority of people 25.70% own only 0.5 acre of land followed by 24.80% own land up to one acre. Land acquired by 8.70% of people up to 1.5 acre followed by 6% up to 2 acre and only 4.5% people possess more than 2 acres of land.



**Table III.9**  
**Source of Household Water**

<b>Source of Water</b>	<b>No of Household</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Pond or river	7575	56.60%
Open well	1020	7.60%
Tube well	2108	15.80%
Ring well	878	6.60%
Supply water	1792	13.40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13373</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source of household water is presented in table III.9. It is found that 56.60% people have water from pond or river for regular use followed by 15.80% from tube well, 7.60% from open well and 6.60% from ring well. Only 13.40% of people get supply water provided by department of public health government of Assam. It is also found that during dry season people suffer from shortage of household water. People use to carry water from distant places during dry season.

**Marriage, Family and Religion:** Patni are endogamous group. Inter-caste marriage is not frequently practiced among Patni. But no fine or punishment is imposed to couples who are willingly marrying outside the community. Among educated section of Patni in urban areas inter-caste

marriage is openly allowed. Majority of Patni families are functionally joint. Nuclear families are emerging among Patni recently in both rural and urban areas.

Patni in contemporary Cachar District are getting converted into several religious sects. *Anukul Panthi* are more in number than other sects. Apart from *Anukula* there are other sects like followers of *Swarupananda*, *Ramakrishna*, *Radharamana* and *Vaishnava* sect. But still many Patni are preferring *kulaguru* practice. There is no open hatred or quarrell among different sects. All most all Patni still retain traditional and contemporary ritual practices. Even worship of Kalthakur, Babahar, Maghai and Bhagai are still prevalent among Patni in rural areas. These worships were more prevalent among Patni at a time when no brahmin used to serve them. Patni earlier used to worship some god and goddess like God Shani, God Narayana and Hari without brahmins. Worship of these god and goddess were known as *seva*. Still *seva* of god and goddess is prevalent among Patni.

**Conclusion:** Patni Settled in Jaldup region of Bangladesh around sixteenth century or before as a eco system community. They used to live on boating and fishing in Jaldup. As a result of increase of density of their population as well as change of ecological condition of that region Patni started to migrate towards Cachar and Jaintia region approximately from eighteenth to mid of twentieth century. At the onset of their migration they mainly settled in river banks with a view to live on fishing and boating. Since this region is not abandoned with rivers and lakes Patni cleared unused land of river valley and started agricultural activity. Patni later on solely depended on agriculture in Cachar. Due to unavailability of sufficient water bodies in Cachar they left occupation of boating but fishing became secondary and seasonal occupation. Patni used to catch fish from rivers and small lakes or low land mainly for consumption. Most of Patni people settled in remote villages of Cachar district. Most of the villages are completely isolated from society. There is no way to reach these villages other than walking on foot from motorable road. Markets, health centres, educational centres, government offices are far away from most of Patni inhabited villages. Due to lack of electricity, water supply, roads and railway they are still living primitive life in these villages. Most of Patni inhabited villages are situated in low land nearby river and get affected by flood water or rain water more

than six months in a year. During rainy season condition of houses, paths become very severe due to mud and water. Yard of every house, cow yard becomes as same as muddy field. Surrounding areas of every house remains filled with water during entire rainy season. Patni in long run could not remain purely as an agricultural community. Majority of Patni are landless now. Landless Patni are working as day labourer, carpenter, mason and helper of mason etc. in rural areas. Very few Patni are engaged in government jobs or in private farms. Those who still engaged in agriculture are solely depended on nature for agricultural production. Flood, drought and attack of insects effect agricultural production every year. Thus majority of Patni farmers are poor. Patni of Cachar District could not adapt with ecological and environmental changes. There are certain Patni inhabited areas of Cachar District where field remains covered with water more than for six months. Patni of these localities used to consume fish but presently quantity of fish in field is getting reduced day by day. Patni are not able to adapt with this kind of silent ecological changes which are taking place in this region. Thus Patni, a self sufficient fishing and agricultural community is losing its source of livelihood day by day and turning into day labourer.

Patni being a deprived and marginalised community in this region started to become aware of their ritual as well social status in pre-British and British period. They fought with hegemonic domination of caste Hindus to retain their ritual status which was forcefully taken by caste and royal hegemonic and coercive power of Sen Dynesty of Bengal. They could realise genesis of their poverty, destitution and marginalisation lies in exploitation. With helping hand of some benevolent social workers during British period particularly Agore Nath Adhikari and Digindra Narayan Bhattacharjee Patni started to improve their social status by using sacred thread. They got priests and barbar with the help of some liberal brahmins to whom Patni shall have to remain ever grateful. During pre-independent period Patnis of Cachar District were much conscious about upliftment of their ritual and social status. Many young souls were dedicated to develop socio-economic condition of the community in the region. They worked a lot to improve educational status of Patni in the than Cachar. Many schools were established up to primary, middle school and high school level. At present this kind of endeavors are rarely found among Patnis. Bond of solidarity among Patni is found decreasing day by day. This may be one of the reasons of their underdevelopment in this region.