Abstract: Kaibarta is recognized as a Scheduled Caste community in Assam. Fishing is the primary occupation of the Kaibarta community. Majority of them lives in rural areas of Assam. They are economically backward, socially depressed and educationally neglected section of the Indian population. Kaibartas are backward in all aspects of their life. The economic condition they live in, the socio-cultural values and institutions they cherish and the kind of relationship they maintain with the non-Kaibarta living around them and in the adjacent areas need to be understood in the light of the present-contemporary society. Both centre and state government announces and implemented various welfare programmes for Scheduled Caste, nothing tangible change occurred among them. Data highlight that hardly any Kaibarta family in Ganakkuchi village takes benefit of those schemes. Their illiteracy and ignorance are used as weapons by government officials to deprive them from basic amenity provided to them by government. The study proposes to investigate how and to what extent government policy help Kaibarta community to bring improve in their socio-economic life in Ganakkuchi Village.

Keywords: Scheduled Caste; Constitutional Provisions; Welfare Programmes and Policies; Kaibarta, Ganakkuchi Village.

I. Introduction

Study of small community in regional setting attains prominence in present contemporary society. Anthropologist and sociologists investigate and analyse nature, structure and relationship of a community with wider social structure. Durkheim, Tonnies, Redfield’s study on small community has impact on society at large. In India small community study attracts attention of social anthropologists and sociologists. In India, Sociologists like S.C Dube, M.N Srinivas, Marriot and many others conducted studies on village community to find out social structure vis-à-vis culture of village community in Indian society. Scholars across disciplines and globes following different theory, methodology and ideology analyse status of scheduled castes. In present contemporary period community studies taken a new turn some studies like G.S. Ghurye (1957), Andre Beteille (1966), B. R. Chauhan (1967,1969), Sachchidanand ( 1974,1980), contributions are noteworthy as they add a different dimension to the study of scheduled castes in India. These studies provide theoretical as well as methodological guidelines to make holistic study of small community in Indian society. Kaibarta community in Ganakkuchi Village of Barpeta district is characterized by backwardness, poverty and therefore it becomes impressive to study this community in contemporary juncture of society. Government of India adopted various plan and policy to safeguard interest of scheduled castes. Policies are formulated and implemented to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, ill health and backwardness of these people. Special provisions are made for Scheduled Castes in constitution of Indian to save them from exploitation, discrimination and to make them at par with wider society.

II. Research Methodology

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data collected through field observation. Interview schedule was use for primary data collection. Secondary data was collected from books, journals, census, periodicals etc. Total sample size 40. The sample was selected by using random sampling methods. Both male and female respondents were representation of the study.

III. Kaibarta Community in Ganakkuchi Village

The Kaibartas are one of the major Scheduled Caste communities of Assam. The Kaibartas are one of the sixteen Scheduled Caste communities of the State as per Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 (Bordoloi: 1994: 1-9). They are found all over India including Bengal. Most probably the Kaibartas might have come to Assam in centuries ago from different states. In Assam they are mainly spread over plains districts of Assam. Fishing is the primary occupation of Kaibartas of Assam. In Sanskrit, the word ‘Kaivartta’ means one who depends on water. In other words, the community that earns its livelihood from related occupation. Anthropological studies of the
so-called ‘extreme occupations’ of the fishing communities have been analyzed in terms of their distinctive values, social structures and organization interrelated to the special demands of the occupational role (Acheson: 1981: 275-316). Kaibarta community has been suffering multiple problems and hardships. The community lives in vicious circles of poverty vis-à-vis other kinds of problems. The Kaibartas are the aboriginal inhabitants of Assam. The origin and migration of Kaibartas are still shrouded with mystery. Doley (1980) opines that swarms of migrants from distance regions have been coming to Assam, since the beginning of human history. While the Brahmins and Kalitas of present Assam claim their descent from the early Aryan settlers, the Kaibartas are believed to be the descendants of the first Dravidian immigrants. The Kaibartas were initially considered a single caste divided into two groups, Jaliya and Haliya. Jaliya Kaibartas are categorized as Scheduled Castes, traditionally engaged in the occupation of fishing. Though Haliya Kaibartas or Mahishyas are traditionally engaged in agriculture. All the Kaibartas in Ganakkuchi village are Jaliya Kaibarta. Ganakkuchi village is situated southern side of Barpeta district of Assam. The total population kaibarta community in Ganakkuchi Village is 2301 (Male-1141 and Female-1160). The community’s economic condition is poor and socio-cultural life is not stable too. The people are always subject of deprivation and discrimination. Though in Assam caste discrimination, atrocity and exploitation is relatively less in comparison to other states in India, the community faces many economic hardships and social malaise in its everyday life. In fact numerous socio-cultural, political and economic problems keep the community always in poverty and distress. In Ganakkuchi Village Kaibarta Community live in poor condition. They suffer from multiple problems. Economic life of majority of them is in bad shape. Education awareness is yet to develop among them. House, sanitation, condition of Kaibarta link road is very pathetic in Ganakkuchi Village. Government of India adopted various welfare plans and policies to safeguard interest of those people. Policies are formulated and implemented to eradicate poverty, ill health and backwardness of scheduled caste. Special provisions are made for Schedule caste in constitution of Indian to save them from exploitation, discrimination and to make them at par with wider society.

**Constitutional Provision of Scheduled Castes**

The provision and safe guards for Scheduled Castes have been incorporated in the Constitution of India. The safeguards are in the field of social, economic, political, educational, and cultural and services under the State for the people belonging to these communities for their development. Who constitute Scheduled Castes and how are the Castes scheduled are contained under Articles 366 (24) and 341 of the Constitution. The safeguards provided to Scheduled Castes are grouped in the following broad heads:

**Social Safeguards:** Article 17, 23, 24 and 25(2) (b) of the Constitution enjoins the State to provide social safeguards to Scheduled Castes.

**Article 17** relates to abolition of untouched ability being practice in society. The Parliament enacted the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 to tackle the problem of untouched ability, which is being practiced against Scheduled Castes.

**Article 23** prohibits traffic in human beings and ‘begar’ and other similar forms of forced labour and provides that any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law. Although there is no specific mentions about the SCs in this Article but majority of the bonded labour come from SCs. Thus, this Article has a special significance for them. The Parliament enacted Bonded Labour system (Abolition) Act, 1976 for identification, liberation and rehabilitation of bonded labours.

**Article 24** provides that no child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment. Even in this Article, there is no specific mention about the SCs but substantial portion of child labour engaged in hazardous employment belong to SCs.

**Article 25(2)(b)** provides that Hindu religious institutions of a public character shall be opened to all classes and sections of Hindus. The term Hindu includes persons professing Sikh, Jain and Buddhist religion.

**Economic Safeguards:** Article 23, 24 and 46 form part of the economic safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

**Article 46** provides, “The States shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

**Educational and Cultural Safeguards:**

**Article 15(4)** empowers the State to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens and for SCs. This provision has enabled the State to reserve seats for SCs in educational institutions in general and professional courses etc.

**Political Safeguards:** Reservation of seats for SCs/STs in the local bodies of the States/UTs, Legislative Assemblies of the State and in Parliament are provided in the Constitution of India as follows:

**Article 243D** Reservation of seats: (1) Seats shall be reserved for (a) the Scheduled Castes; and (b) the Scheduled Tribes in every Panchayat and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in the Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the Panchayat area of or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.
Secondary and post graduate stages to enable direct election is that Municipality as the population of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to fill the number of seats shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

Article 243T Reservation of seats: (1) Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in every Municipality and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

Article 243T: Reservation of seats: (1) Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in every Municipality and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat is that Municipality as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the Municipal area or of the Scheduled Tribes in the Municipal area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

(2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

(3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

Article 243T: Reservation of seats: (1) Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in every Municipality and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat is that Municipality as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the Municipal area or of the Scheduled Tribes in the Municipal area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

(2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

(3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

(4) The offices of Chairpersons in the Municipalities shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide.

Article 330 Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes in the House of the People for: (1) Seats shall be reserved in the House of the People for The Scheduled Castes.

(2) The number of seats reserved in any State or Territory for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes under clause (1) shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats allotted to the State or Union territory or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State or Union territory or part of the State or the Union territory, as the case may be, in respect of which seats are so reserved, bears to the total population of the State or Union territory.

Article 332 Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States: (1) Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes except the Scheduled Tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam, in the Legislative Assembly of every State.

(2) Seats shall be reserved also for the autonomous districts in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Assam.

(3) The number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly of any State under clause (1) shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats in the Assembly as the population of the Scheduled Castes of the State or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State or part of the State, as the case may be, in respect of which seats are so reserved, bears to the total population of the State.

Article 334 Reservation of Seats and special representation to cease after sixty years: Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provisions of this para, the provisions of this Constitution relating to:

(a) The reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People and in Legislative Assemblies of the States; and

(b) The representation of the Anglo-Indian community in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assemblies of the States by nomination shall cease to have effect on the expiration of a period of Sixty years from the commencement of the Constitution.

Service Safeguards:

Service Safeguards are contained in Articles 16(4), 16(4A) and 335 in the year 2001, the Parliament through Constitution (Eighty-fifth Amendment) Act, 2001 amended the provisions contained in Article 16(4A). In Article 16(4A) for the words: “in matters of promotion to any class” has been substituted. The effect of this amendment is that the SCs/STs promoted earlier than their counter-part in general category by virtue of reservation policy shall be senior to general category in the promoted scale/post.

IV. Programmes and Policies for Scheduled Castes

Various welfare programmes and policies for the Scheduled Castes have been implemented by the Central and State Government. Some of the programmes and policies are fully financed by the Central Government, while some programmes and policies are implemented and financed by State Governments.

Welfare Policy of Central Government for Scheduled Caste:

Pre Matric Scholarship for the children whose parents engaged in unclean occupation (ST & SC Development Department): Under the scheme, Pre Matric Scholarship is provided to the SC students for residing in hostels of recognized schools, whose parents are engaged in unclean occupations. The scholarship is provided both for hostellers as well as the scholars reading in class I to X. expenditure on the scheme beyond the committed liability of the State assessed at the close of the 11th Plan would be borne 100% by the center. A provision of Rs. 10.00 lakh has been proposed for the Annual Plan 2013-2014.

Post Matric Scholarship for SC students (ST & SC Development Department): Post Matric Scholarship is being awarded to SC students for prosecuting studies at Post Matric, post secondary and post graduate stages to enable them to complete their studies in recognized educational institutions inside as well as outside the State. The
scholarships are sanctioned as per the rates prescribed by Government of India from time to time. The central Government meets the incremental requirement of funds for providing Post Matric Scholarship, while the State Government will meets the committed liability transferred to the state at the end of the 11th Plan. A central assistance of Rs. 6500.00 lakh has been proposed for the annual plan 2013-2014 to meet the expenditure arising out of the revision of rates and increasing numbers of the beneficiaries under Central plan scheme.

*Up-gradation of merit of SC students (ST & SC Development Department):* The aim of the scheme is to provide special coaching to SC students at selected Higher Secondary Institutions of the State to upgrade their academic skills to enable them to seek entrance into elite academic and technical institutions. As per the guidelines issued by Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India has approved 61 awards (SC students) to avail the package assistance of Rs. 15,000/- in a year under the scheme. A central assistance of Rs. 35.60 lakh is proposed for the annual plan 2013-14 under this central plan scheme.

*Special Central Assistance (SCA) FOR Special Component Plan (SCP) for SCs (ST & SC Development Department):* Special Central Assistance is being released by Government of India to SCP for SCs for implementation of various economic development programmes under different income generating scheme like agriculture, horticulture, land reforms, minor irrigation, soil conservation, animal husbandry, forestry fisheries, village and small industries, cooperatives, education etc. This Programme is implemented through OSFDC, which is the state channelizing agency. The special central assistance under SCP to SCs is utilized for composite schemes/ programmes for special vulnerable groups in clusters including skill up gradation for assisting SC families. A special central assistance of Rs. 4707.00 lakh has been proposed for Annual Plan 2013-14 for implementation of various incomes generating schemes for SCs.

**V. Welfare Policy of State Government for Scheduled Caste**

*Managerial Subsidy to Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe Development Finance Cooperative Corporation (OSFDC) (ST & SC Development Department):* OSFDC provides subsidy to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes beneficiaries for bankable Income Generating Schemes through lending banks. The Corporation is maintaining separate staff in districts to implement Dispersed Tribal Development Project (DTDP) and at the State headquarters to implement the credit linked income-generating Programmes for SC and ST beneficiaries. Besides it has undertaken massive training Programmes in various recognized institutions, for unemployed ST & SC youths. An amount of Rs. 150.00 lakh is proposed for the Annual Plan 2013-14 to meet the establishment cost and salary of the staff at headquarters and district offices. Out of the above provision Rs. 120.00 lakhs are earmarked for salary of the staffs.

*Rehabilitation of Victims of Atrocities and Legal Aid to SCs (ST & SC Development Department):* A token provision of Rs. 0.01 lakh is provided for Monetary Relief to victims of Atrocities and Rs. 0.01 lakh for Legal Aid to SCs during the Annual Plan 2013-14.

Fishing is considered to be the primitive occupation of Kaibartas. The government of Assam introduced some important schemes for fisherman communities. These are:

*Activity and Programmes of the department Fish Seed Farms during, 2008-09 and 2009-10 Fish Seed Farming:* During the year 2008-09, 10 Departmental fish seed farms and 94 hectare of nursery and rearing water area of individual farmers have been developed for quality seed production. During the year 2009-10, 347.89 Lakh has been received for establishment of 37 nos of hatcheries for Indian Major carps, 3 nos, Magur breeding hatcheries, 3nos. and Chital breeding hatcheries 3 nos.

*Reclamation of Derelict Water Bodies:* Aim of the Scheme is to reclaim the water bodies for enhancement of fish production on in the State and also provide employment to the rural unemployed youth. During the year 2008-09 an amount of ‘409.90 lakh has been received for reclamation of 289 hectare of derelict water bodies and an amount of ‘958.00 lakhs have been drawn during the year 2009-10 for reclamation of 660 hectare derelict water bodies.

*Assam Agricultural Competitiveness Project (AACP):* During the year 2008-09, about 896 hectare of Farmers Pond and Community Tank, about 85 hectares of Integrated Fish Farming and 76 hectare of Beef Fisheries were developed with community participation. During the year 2009-10 an amount of ‘444.00 lakh has been received and about 197.39 hectare of Farmers Ponds were developed and 2505 nos. of fish farmers have been benefitted under this Project.

*Matsya Mitra:* To support limited field level officers in extension services Govt. has initiated a scheme in the name of Matsya Mitra. In the scheme educated unemployed youth are trained in scientific fish farming in a crash course in Raha Fishery College. The trainees are provided with a kit box required for testing of different aspects in fish farming. The trainees are supposed to undergo field exposure under Extension Officer for gaining necessary practical knowledge for imparting to neighbouring fish farmers at Gaon Panchayat Level. Already 290 nos. of youth have been trained in 10 Districts.

*Training on Aquarium Maintenance:* To exploit new employment avenues among educated unemployed a new innovative training on Aquarium maintenance was started in College of Fisheries, Raha in collaboration with NABARD. Already 44 unemployed boys and girls have undertaken the training and many of them started their own business of ornamental fish and aquarium. During 2008-09, another 20 young boys and girls were trained on
aquarium business in collaboration with Micro Small & Medium Entrepreneurship Development Institute, Govt. of India, N.E. Regional Office, Guwahati.

**Development Action Plan for 2010-11:** An amount `2590.00 lakh has been allotted during 2010-11 for taking up some innovative programmes as well as for continuation of ongoing developmental scheme under the fishery sector. In order to achieve self sufficiency in fish production and generating self Employment, the State Fishery Department has given emphasis on the following components.
2. Provide extension service for undertaking breeding and propagation of fish species for enhancing quality fish seed as table Fish.
3. Utilization of low-laying area through development and adoption of resource base technology for production.
4. Socio-economic development of schedule caste and schedule Tribe people and other vulnerable section of the society.

VI. **Kaibarta and Government Policy in Ganakkuchi Village**

In Ganakkuchi Village Kaibarta Community as a whole are deprived of all government amenities. Awareness about the Programmes and Policies provided by Government for Scheduled Castes are shown in following Diagram.

Data indicate that majority of the respondents (90%) are do not know about the Government Programmes and Policies, only 10% has a little bit idea about the about Government Programmes and Policies of Scheduled Castes. The Kaibartas of the study villages depend on traditional technologies for fishing. The discussion on the economic aspect of the Kaibartas of the villages indicates a number of difficulties and disadvantages that are present in the traditional occupational pattern of fishing. These difficulties and disadvantages could be resolved by way of taking up different steps by development agencies and organizations. The socio-economic condition of the majority of the Kaibartas is not good. Consequently, the Kaibartas who mostly depend upon their traditional calling are experiencing a number of problems including encroachment of inland water bodies, floods, shortage of capital, difficulties in transportation and marketing of their catch, etc. Condition of road, school, house, electricity in Kaibarta inhabited localities are worse till today. Due to ignorance and illiteracy they are deprived from the govt. policies and schemes.

**Recommendations:**

Following recommendations are made from the study.
- Special attention needs to be given to improve educational attainment of Kaibarta in Ganakuchi Village.
- Government plan and policy should be implemented properly for development of Kaibarta in Ganakuchi Village.
- Government should look after problems of Kaibarta and try to solve their problem in a concrete manner.
- Kaibarta should not be socially excluded rather measures should be taken to include them in wider society.
VII. Conclusion

Thus from the above discussion it can be concluded that the Kaibarta in Ganakkuchi Village are deprived of all government aid and facility. Poverty, illiteracy and ignorance are being capitalized by government officials to deprive them. Government of India adopted various plan and policy to safeguard interest of scheduled castes. Policies are formulated and implemented to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, ill health and backwardness of these people. Special provisions are made for Scheduled Castes in constitution of Indian to save them from exploitation, discrimination and to make them at par with wider society. Government of Assam too has taken some measures to improve socio-economic condition of scheduled caste including fisher man communities in Assam. The study reveals that despite of plans and policies taken by government to improve condition of life of scheduled caste in general and fisher man of Assam in particular, Kaibarta in Ganakkuchi Village are still suffering from poverty and illiteracy. Majority of Kaibarta are living in below poverty line. Fruit of government policy is not percolating down to Kaibarta for which they are still remaining backward and underdeveloped.

References