

CHAPTER- II

FIELD AND METHODOLOGY

2.1: Field of Study:

The present study was conducted in the Golaghat district of the State of Assam. Assam is an area of 78,438 sq. km with 31,205,576 population (male 15,939,443, female 15,266,133). Population density is 398 per sq. km. and about 14.10% of the total populations live in urban areas. The rate of growth of urbanization in Assam in this period was faster than that of India. But it is still predominantly a rural society. There are large inter-district variations with respect to urban areas. For example, Guwahati has 328 sq. km. of an urban area while only 20.49 sq. km. are classified as an urban area in the Golaghat district (as per the 2011 census report).

The composition of the population has undergone substantial change in the period of 1961-2011. The proportion of persons belonging to the age group 60 years was around 8.6 % in 2011 as compared to the 1961 census. It is projected that the figure will reach at 9.34% by the end of the year 2021.

Assamese society has been a melting pot of many cultures that have lent it a distinct character. The majority of the people are Hindus followed by Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, and people from other religions who are also included in large Assamese society. Like most other societies, Assamese society is also patrilineal, with the children taking their father's name. Regarding property, both boys and girls are entitled to a share. In the rural areas of Assam, the joint family system is still vogue although the breakup is more evident in big cities. It is widely a proven fact that Assam resides in her villages. The

villages do not have strong demarcation lines as such. Generally, wide expansion of paddy fields, lakes, rivers, thick jungles are taken as boundaries between two villages.

“*Namghar*” is a religious place that assumes importance in the Assamese societal build. Every village boasts of such a *Namghar*. The *Namghar* serves the multifaceted purpose of holding prayer meetings, popularly known as *Naam*, discussions on various village development matters as well as solving of disputes.

The rural economy is ruled by the weekly sale of farm produce in a place called *Hatt-Bazar* (periodical market). Since farming and cultivation are the principal sources of income so whatever is grown in the fields is sold by the people in such a periodical market; especially grain, vegetables, etc. and the cash they get is used to buy the essential commodities. The Assamese have always had a name as being simple. Their reputation as good hosts goes hand in hand with their simple and native nature. Assamese women do not have much say in matters outside the boundaries of their houses.

In Assamese society, elderly people are always given high respect in every aspect of social life. The eldest members are generally the decision-makers of the important issues of a village. They are given the authority of decision making in the settlement of village disputes, in agricultural activities, festivals, and other such issues. It is considered that they have earned tremendous knowledge about different happenings of society due to their long term experiences of life. In the past, in the absence of formal education, knowledge earned through informal way was given importance. The writings of different noted poet, literary personalities, and novelists have depicted a picture of Assamese society where elders and aged were always respected. The works of famous literary personalities of Assam, such as Mahendra Bora’s autobiography “*Upola Nadir Dore*,” Homen Borgohain’s “*Atmanusandhan*”; Dr. Lakhinandan Bora’s “*Kal Balukat Khuj*” etc. have depicted the picture of Assamese society where older people were always given high respect. Now, of course, times are changing. Urbanisation has left a negative impact on the social milieu of

Assamese society; people have become more self-centred in order to survive in the rat race of modern life.

For this study, the Golaghat district was purposefully selected. A brief profile of the district had given below.

2:2 Brief Profile of Golaghat:

Golaghat, the erstwhile sub-division of the Sibsagar district of Assam, has attained the status of a district on 23rd October 1987 with its headquarters at Golaghat town. The entire Golaghat district was originally inhabited by the main communities of the district are the Ahoms, Kalita, Assamese Brahmins, Tea tribes, Missing, Chutiya, and Kachari. There is also a small population of Turung, Aiton, and Karbi people living in the district. Other communities like Marwari, Nepali, Bengali, Bihari, and SC community Kaiborta in particular are living in the township and countryside of the district. There are a number of mythological and hypothetical believes regarding the origin of the name "Golaghat". One of the most popular beliefs is that – The name of Golaghat is originated from the words 'Gola' meaning a shop and 'Ghat' meaning a bathing and landing place or enclosure for boats, etc. There was a Gola near the Ghat on the river Dhansiri. The Golaghat district is divided into three sub-divisions viz, Golaghat, Bokakhat, and Sarupathar. Again each sub-division is divided into revenue circles and under revenue circles, there are Mauzas comprising villages of all kinds. In the district, there are only 6 revenue circles with 1125 villages. Golaghat sub-division has 3 revenue circles and the other two subdivisions have one revenue circle each. In the district, there are 8 Community Development Blocks. The district consists of as many as 7 towns (5 statutory towns and two census towns). The number of Police Stations in the district is 8. Golaghat district covers an area of 3502 Sq.Km. (Rural: 3465.55 Sq.Km and Urban: 36.45 Sq.Km.).

Golaghat district shelters a population of 1,066,888 as per the 2011 census, which includes 543,161 males and 523,727 females, sex ratio being 964 female per thousand males. The average density is 305 per sq. km. The Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste population of the district works out to be 9.9 % and 2.8% respectively of the total population. The major religious groups are Hindus (813263 Nos. or 76.23 %), Muslims (74808 Nos. or 7.02%), Christian (52277 Nos. or 4.89%), Buddhist (2480 Nos. or 0.24%), Sikhs (818 Nos. or 0.08%), and Jains (308 Nos. or 0.02%) and others (122934 Nos. or 11.52%) as per 2011. Out of the total population of Golaghat district, 9.16 per cent (97736 Nos.) people live in urban areas and 90.84 per cent (969152 Nos.) live in rural areas.

The main rivers of the district are the river Brahmaputra, Dhansiri, Kakodonga, Doyang, Galabeel, and Diffloo. Dhansiri is the main river of the district which originates from Laisang peak of Nagaland. It streams through a distance of 352 km from the south to the north before joining the river Brahmaputra. Its catchment area is 1220 sq. km. Dayang, Nambor, Doigrung, and Kalioni are the four rivulets of Dhansiri. A significant part of the district is vulnerable to recurrent flood, erosion, landslides, occasional drought, etc. As the district is fertile, the inhabitants are basically farmers in which the paddy is the dominant crop cultivated with the traditional methods. The agricultural landscape is the main source of tourist attraction.

The economy of the Golaghat district is agriculture-based. Tea, rice, and sugar cane are the main agricultural crops grown in the district, with tea being the largest agricultural industry in the Golaghat district. The rearing and reeling of muga and endi, the making of Japi (headgear), and earthen pottery and the extraction of agaru oil are the cottage industries prevalent in Golaghat district. Sericulture is another cottage industry of the district. It is used during the agricultural off-season as a subsidiary occupation. In the Golaghat district, about 90.84% of the total populations live in rural areas of villages. As per the 2011 census. Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) is the only major heavy industry

in the district. It is situated in Numaligarh. It was established in October 2000 as the latest multi-faceted refinery in the country. It has achieved global standards by obtaining a certificate of its quality. 45% of the population are workers, while 55% of the population are non-workers. Out of the total worker's population, the break up is as follows-

- Cultivation: 60%
- Agricultural laborers: 3.7%
- Livestock, forestry, fishery: 1.0%
- Marginal workers & other services: 30.0%
- Manufacturing, process, repairing: 1.62%

This is a clear indication that the majority of the population is dependent on agriculture. Employment in trade, commerce, and industries is almost insignificant.

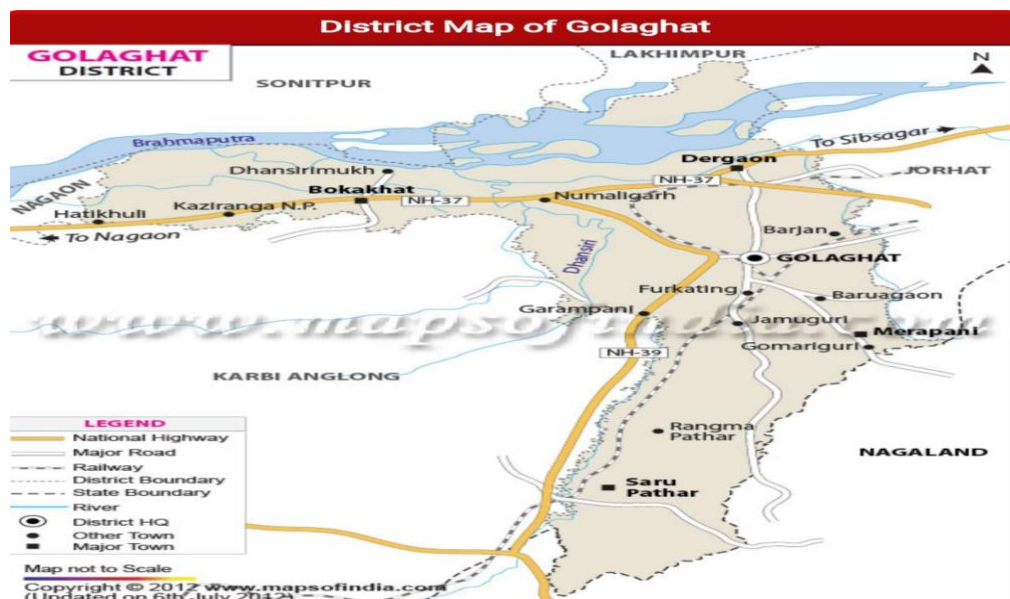
Agriculture is the principal occupation and more than 85% of the total population depends on it.

In Assam, sericulture is an age-old traditional cottage industry. Next to agriculture, sericulture is the major agro-based industry generating a large amount of employment and income in the rural areas of Assam with minimum investment cost. It plays a very vital role in the socio-economic development of the weaker section of the rural population, especially during their off-agricultural season.

There is only one state district hospital (Kushal Konwar Civil Hospital), 4 CHC, and 40 PHC (Primary Health Centre) in the entire district. In many of the Health Centres where minimum facilities for health-care are not available. Lack of doctors is another problem. In Golaghat district very few voluntary agencies and other such government sponsored agencies have worked for the aged. *Namghar* is the only institution that provides a platform for the aged for interaction. Lack of a good communication system, shortage of power, and

lack of proper irrigation and marketing facilities add to the poverty in the district. The dearth of any major and small industry is also responsible for multiplying the problem of unemployment while the galloping explosion in the rate of population growth has shown signs of negative impacts. The local economy is thus characterized by a subsistence level of production and consumption. The periodical floods have destructed the economic structure of the district, especially the economy of the village people. In such a situation it becomes difficult for the family members to look after the aged. The aged having no income have considered being an additional burden for their families. Keeping in view all these, the district is purposefully selected to deal with the problems faced by the aged living in the area. It has been expected that the study of the aged living in the area can represent the real picture of the condition of the aged in rural society.

2.2.A: District Map Of Golaghat



Source- www.mapsofindia.com

2.3: Methodology:

2.3. A: Selection of the Field:

Since, the study was conducted on the problems (such as Problems of the elderly in maintaining family and social relation in old age, social adjustment problem, physical and mental health problems, economic problems, etc.) of the elderly women in rural settings, so, rural Golaghat is purposefully selected for the study. The personality, attitude, behavior, and mindset of an individual are determined by the socio-cultural environment in which he is born and brought up. There are strong reasons behind selecting the Golaghat district as fields of study. In the discussion of the field of study, a brief explanation about the district has been provided by highlighting the different features such as its origin, geographical features, communication facilities, population, business and economy, administrative system, education, health care facilities, and other such institutions which provides recreational facilities if any, because all these aspects have direct links with the lifestyle of the people in a society. For example, elderly needs recreational facilities especially in the available leisure time in old age, and if they are provided such facilities then their adjustment becomes easy in old age. The availability of health care institutions is considered important keeping in view the physical and mental health problems at old age.

2.3. B: The universe of the Study:

The universe of the study consists of the elderly women living within rural areas of Golaghat district of Assam.

The study had covered 200 elderly living in 16 villages of the district. In the selection of the villages following criteria have been fulfilled- (i) eight villages had been selected which were situated far from the district headquarter (ii) eight multi-caste 'fringe' villages had been selected to study the status of the elderly women

2.3. C: Selection of the Respondents:

The study was carried out in Golaghat district of Assam covering 200 elderly women. To explore characteristics of 'rural elderly' the study was carried out in selected villages of Golaghat district so that the ideal rural character of the elderly women can be explored and their problems can be reflected. Respondents had been selected with the help of snowball sampling. However, at the first stage a list of elderly women was prepared from the voter list of the study villages and the second stage after identification of two-three elderly women, 200 elderly women had been interviewed on the basis of the information of the earlier keeping in view the objective of the research.

2.4: Collection of Data:

The data for the study were collected from two sources i.e., primary and secondary. To collect the primary and secondary data the following tools and techniques were applied:

- (i) Interview Schedule.
- (ii) Interview Guide.
- (iii) Observation.

2.4. A: Interview Schedule:

The interview schedule is one of the best methods, which was applied to collect the data from each of the households of the villages and wards by canvassing to the respondents, who were selected according to the criteria laid down for their selection.

The schedule had been divided into five parts, viz. socio-economic background of the respondents, problems of the elderly in the family and in the larger society, economic

problems of the elderly, health problems, and correlates of good adjustment. The questions were framed on each aspect of the study on a logical basis.

2.4: B: Pre-Testing:

The interview schedule was pre-tested on 40 sample respondents from both rural and urban settings. After pre-testing, the interview schedule was given a final shape by deleting or incorporating a few questions which were found to be irrelevant/ relevant for the purpose of the present study.

The interview schedule has been given in Annexure 3.

2.4. C: Interview Guide:

Through the help of an interview guide, we have collected secondary data regarding the location and settings of the study area. Much important information was collected with the help of the interview guide from the respondents. The secondary data were collected from the authorized sources. The interview guide was applied to collect the following information-

- (1) To collect the list of the retirees from the District Collector's Pension Office
- (2) To collect information regarding the selected field
- (3) To prepare the list of non-pensioner retirees with the help of panchayat members and village headmen's' informant

2.5: Observation:

To collect the data, observation techniques were also adopted. Through the field observation, it was possible to know the attitudes of the respondents towards the issues of the study as well as their life and activities, rituals and practices, and especially the problems they face in their everyday life.

2.5. A: Classification and Tabulation of Data:

The collected data through the interview schedule were classified with both simple frequency and cross-tabulation. The classified data were put into tables. The tabulation was made by SPSS (13.0) programmer. A simple frequency table, cross-tabulation was made to verify the relationship between variables.

2.5. B: Data Analysis:

The data were analyzed statistically according to the tables. Appropriate statistical procedures have been adopted according to the merit of the data wherever necessary. For the analysis of the data, the researcher used 'descriptive analysis processes. The analysis of data was based on logical as well as a statistical point of view. In the study, statistical data was based on primary and secondary data, and logical analysis was based on information and comments of the respondents stated in the interview schedule. In this regard calculations of frequency and percentages have also been used for the proper analysis of the study. Besides, this case study method is also used to have an in-depth interpretation of the situation of the elderly.

In the present chapter, an attempt has been made to describe briefly the field and methodology and also the procedure followed in conducting the present research work. The findings and interpretations have been described in the forthcoming Chapters.

2.6: Fieldwork Experience**2.6. A: few Experiences of the researcher during field visit:-**

So on the duration of the researcher's visit in the villages of all among the elderly the researcher had taken interview of, the researcher is going to share some personal details about a few elderly women who shared their situations with the researcher. So the

researcher will be sharing some of the social activities and involvement of elderly women in the rural areas of Golaghat district. The activities include:-

1. Going for evening prayers at social institutions like Namghars (A prayer hall in Assam for communal worship) the elderly women feels a sense of spirituality within them, and also a place where the elderly women get a chance to interact with their peers which helps them to share about their personal things which help in removing anxiety or any kind of distress a woman suffers from.
2. The researcher also noticed that some of the elderly women consume their local drink made out of rice locally known as Laopani (mainly within the tribal communities).
3. Whenever any auspicious day, any occasion or anyone deceased, without the involvement of the elderly women they are not complete, they perform rituals (kirtans), prayers, cooking, and are involved in every small aspect of every activity.
4. Elderly women always tend to speak a lot whenever they meet a new person and start to share every small and big achievement or any other interesting incidents about their personal life, in short sometimes they seem to be very talkative in nature.

2.7: Limitation of the Field Study.

There are numerous problems that a researcher face whenever she visits the area of study. Whenever the researcher interviews an elderly woman the researcher faces problems such as an elderly woman lags behind to reciprocate whenever she is asked a question, problems such as unclear articulation of words by the respondent while replying, and also the researcher needs to repeat the questions many times for the respondent to understand because of the hearing impairment problems of the elderly which also consumes a lot of time interviewing a single respondent.

Also, another problem a researcher's face while interviewing a respondent is that a respondent often tends to share her every bit of details about her life and also about the events she had come across during her past life which consumes more time and also which overlaps the actual questions asked by the interviewer and the researcher feels reluctant to interrupt as the elderly may feel disrespected.

The researcher also faces problems like there are many respondents who delay the interview showing some excuses and asking the researcher to come another day which consumes a lot of time, as well as the researcher, needs to travel to some distant places to meet the respondents.

The researcher faces some disturbances while interviewing a respondent belonging to a lower economic social status who often lives in the most rural parts, whenever the interviewer tries to interview a respondent most often the whole family member of the respondent comes around and sit or stand nearby the respondent and the interviewer including kids which can be a hindrance sometime to conduct the interview properly.

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