

Studies in Rural Change — Assam Series.

**DISPUR**  
**A STUDY**  
**IN RURAL CHANGE IN ASSAM**

**P. C. GOSWAMI**

**AGRO-ECONOMIC RESEARCH CENTRE FOR**  
**NORTH EAST INDIA**  
**Jorhat : Assam**

**A STUDY  
IN RURAL CHANGE IN ASSAM  
DISPUR**

**( A REPORT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESURVEY OF A  
VILLAGE IN KAMRUP DISTRICT )**

Price : Rs. 8-00

**PRABHAS CHANDRA GOSWAMI  
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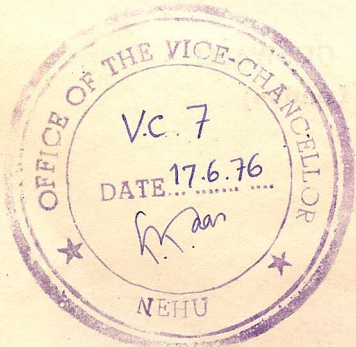
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STUDY TEAM

DIRECTION & REPORT WRITING :

**Dr. P. C. Goswami**

SUPERVISION OF FIELD INVESTIGATION AND SOCIOLOGICAL  
INFORMATION :

**Shri P. D. Saikia**

FIELD INVESTIGATION:

**Shri M. D. Barkataki**

**Shri D. K. Buragohain**

SUPPLEMENTARY FIELD INVESTIGATION:

**Shri J. N. Sarma**

**Shri C. K. Bora**

TABULATION:

**Shri C. K. Bora**

**Shri D. K. Buragohain**

SKETCH MAP:

**Shri M. D. Barkataki**

GRAPHS:

**Shri C. K. Bora**

STUDY GUIDE

DIRECTION & REPORT WRITING

Dr. P. C. Goswami

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## PREFACE

1. The establishment of four Agro-Economic Research Centres at Delhi, Poona, Santiniketan and Madras in 1954 under the patronage of the Union Ministry of Food and Agriculture ushered in a new era in the field of research in agricultural economics and rural sociology in this country. By 1964, four other research Centres at Gwalior, Jorhat, Anand and Allahabad have come into existence. All these centres have been conducting research on socio-economic life of rural people in their respective areas. The jurisdiction of the Jorhat Centre extends over Assam, Manipur, Tripura, NEFA and Nagaland.

2. The most important task entrusted to these Centres is the study of rural change through continuous village surveys. The purpose of such a survey is to gauge rural change by comparing two sets of data on the economy collected at two points of time, usually at 5 years' interval. The selection of the village is necessarily purposive on the basis of the operation of certain forces of change e. g. new irrigation project, Panchayats, establishment of an industry in the vicinity, introduction of new crops and methods of cultivation etc. etc. Hundreds of villages have so far been surveyed by these Centres and scores of village survey reports completed. Our Centre has completed by now ten reports (eight first point surveys and two resurveys) on village surveys, besides completing field investigations of nine other villages, four of them being Resurveys. In addition several reports on ad-hoc studies relating to agro-economic problems in North East India have also been completed.

3. The present report is the first village Resurvey Report prepared by our Centre. The First Point Survey of this village was conducted by the Visva-Bharati Centre in May, 1955 to study the impact of the growing city of Gauhati on the village; an abridged report was prepared by them in 1960. After the establishment of the Agro-Economic Research Centre at Jorhat in 1960 the burden of resurveying the village fell on us. The village was taken up for resurvey in November, 1961 and completed by the middle of January, 1962. Data on resurvey thus refer to the calendar year, 1961 while that of the first point survey to the financial year, 1954-55.

4. In the present report changes affecting the life of the villagers since the first-point survey (1955) are observed and hints given on the causes effecting these changes in appropriate places. Although during the intervening period the village has undergone rapid transformation, it is ascertained that prior to 1955 (or more correctly before independence), the village did not attract new settlers. It was inhabited at that time by

two indigenous communities of Assam, viz. the Kacharis and the Koches. Because of the tremendous growth of industrial activities and urbanisation around the town of Gauhati, there has been great impact on the life of the villagers. With the increasing opportunities for employment, the importance of Agriculture as a source of income has declined. Shrinkage of the area of cultivable land has also contributed to the decline of the importance of agriculture.

5. Like other reports, the present one is also the joint product of the Centre prepared under the general supervision of the Director. The Study Team closely connected with the project is given elsewhere in the report. Besides, Shri N. Saha, Research Officer supervised the printing of this Report. I am grateful to my colleagues for their sincere cooperation. I must also extend our thanks to the villagers of Dispur for their cooperation and assistance to our staff. Mention might also be made of Shri Gopal Boro, *Gaonbura* (village Headman) who assisted our field staff in the investigation. We are also grateful to the staff of the Revenue Department at Gauhati for supplying us with all office records of the village. Thanks are also due to M/s. Assam Printing Works Private Limited of Jorhat for their sincere effort in printing this report.

6. Because of the financial assistance from the Union Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Cooperation it has been possible to print the present resurvey report for wider circulation. We are grateful to the Ministry for their financial support. The Centre has a programme to print most of its village resurvey reports and the first point village survey reports of the tribal villages.

7. I hope the present resurvey report will be able to attract attention of the social scientists to the neglected field of socio-economic study of rural life in North East India.

Agro-Economic Research Centre  
for N. E. India, Jorhat.  
March, 1967.

P. C. GOSWAMI,  
DIRECTOR

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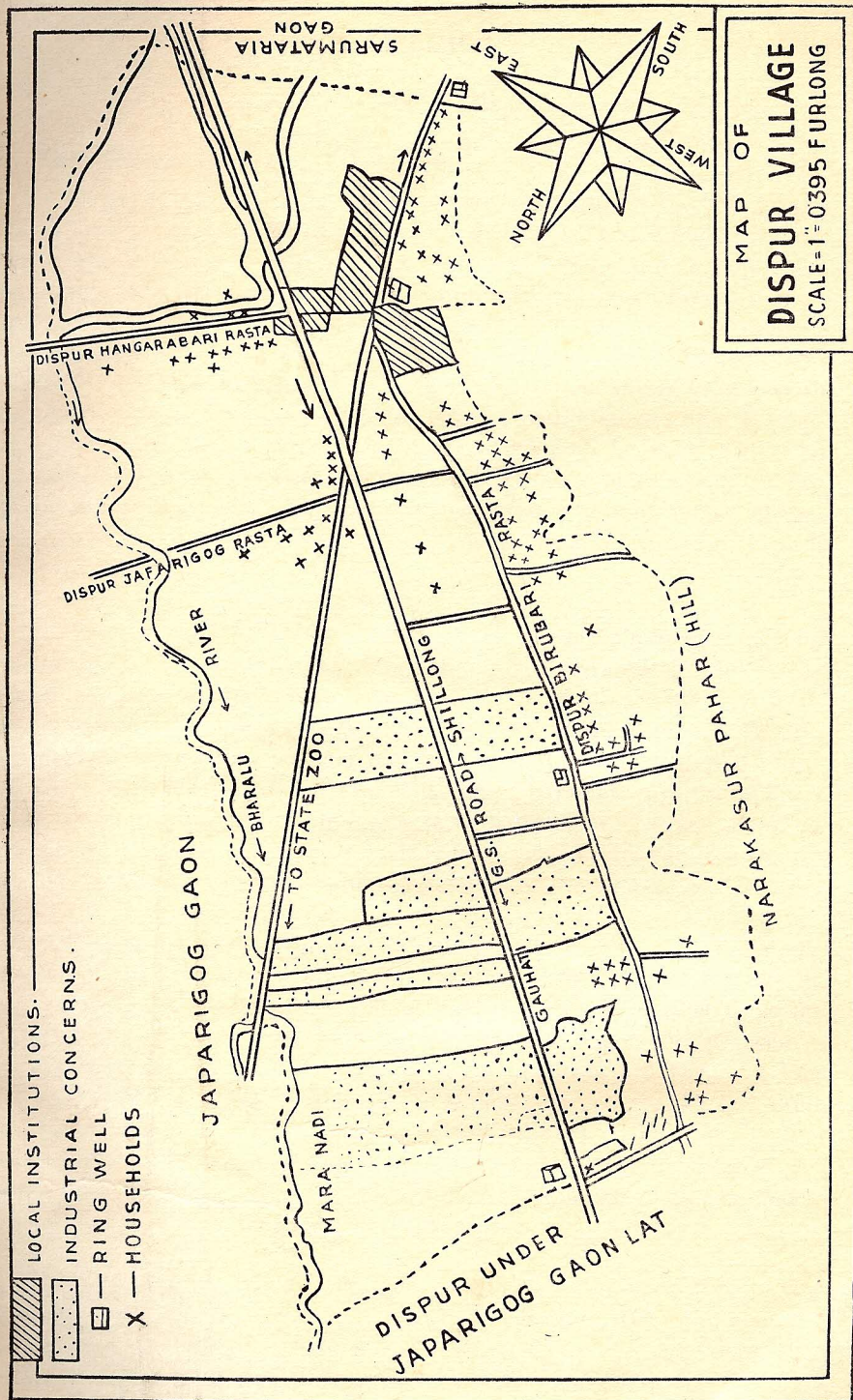
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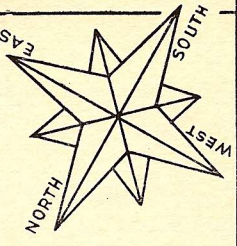
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MAP OF  
**DISPUR VILLAGE**  
 SCALE = 1" = 0.395 FURLONG



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

#### I. The Village Setting

I. 1. Dispur is situated in the south-eastern approach to Gauhati by the side of Gauhati-Shillong Road. Gauhati is the biggest and the most important town of Assam. With rapid industrialisation in and around the town and with large expansion of administrative apparatus and cultural activities within it, the town of Gauhati has also shown tremendous increase of population. While the population of Gauhati was 29,600 in 1941 and 43,600 in 1951, it increased to 100,700 in 1961. With Jhalukbari, Pandu, Amingaon, Kamakhya, North-Gauhati and Khanapara the population of Greater Gauhati is likely to be over 1 lakh 60 thousands. Though officially not included in the greater Gauhati, this whole strip of land consisting of the above townships and a few villages and comprising an area of about 14 miles in length and 3 miles in breadth forms a single unit.

I. 2. The condition of a village situated in the periphery of a rapidly growing town will naturally experience the impact of rapid changes. Dispur is situated at about 5 miles away from the heart of the town; it is almost a part of the greater Gauhati. The swift changes in and around Gauhati are having their impact on the village itself and within the next ten years the village is likely to lose its rural character. The population composition in the village will surely show a different complex (both in sex and occupational pattern) after a few years, and by that time, it might be difficult to trace out the original population of the village.

I. 3. All the facilities available at Gauhati, such as railway station, post and telegraph office, educational facilities, daily market etc. are at an easy reach of the villagers. How the villagers are availing these facilities is a different matter and will be discussed later. Very recently the City Bus routes of Gauhati have been extended towards Dispur. The city buses now ply from Jhalukbari to Khanapara crossing Dispur (and also Pandu and Gauhati) on the way. With present facilities of city bus services, the village is now linked up with the everyday activities of the town. Even the rickshaws are readily available and in case of an emergency one can reach the town within a very short time.

I. 4. The first-point survey of Dispur was completed in May, 1955. The resurvey of the village was taken in hand in November, 1961 and completed in January, 1962. During this interval of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  years, the village has witnessed rapid changes in various aspects of the village life.

## 2. Rainfall, Temperature and Soil

2. 1. The rainfall and temperature data are recorded at Gauhati which is situated on the bank of the river Brahmaputra and is 182 ft. above sea level. The Brahmaputra valley as a whole experiences heavy monsoonic rainfall. The rainfall is heavier on the foothills of the Himalayas and in eastern districts. Rainfall is comparatively low at Gauhati. Annual average rainfall at Gauhati in 1961 was 63.46 inches (1,612 m. m.). June, July and August are the wettest and also the hottest months. Annual average maximum temperature at Gauhati is 84.7°F. and minimum is 66.6°F. Temperature is generally high from April to October. Winter months are, however, delightful. Table 1.1 shows the monthly distribution of temperature and rainfall at Gauhati.

2. 2. The village area of Dispur is undulating and interspersed with small hillocks and paddy fields. Scientific classification of the village soil is not possible for want of data on soil survey. The uplands are hilly and seem to be of red loam variety. These are comparatively unfruitful. The low lands are alluvial and fertile and suitable for production of rice.

## 3. The General Condition of the Village

3. 1. The main body of the village lies on the south-western side of the Gauhati Shillong Road and extends upto the hillocks on the south-west. The village is nearly one mile in length and one-fourth mile in breadth. There are small hillocks at the south-western side of the village and the houses are constructed just by the side of it. These hillocks were once very densely forested. But it is now almost cleared up by the continuous collection of firewood, both for home consumption and for sale. In some sites the hillocks are cut out and the loose soil is carried by trucks to Gauhati town to fill up the low-lying areas. During winter a number of trucks are seen carrying loose soil from Dispur. There is a small river in the western side of the village called Bharalu, which passes through the cultivable lands of the village and thereby provides irrigation facilities to the villagers. From the long past the natural resources have been contributing substantially to the village economy. Within the last five years, some owners of the hilly land have derived a considerable income from the sale of loose soil. The collection and sale of firewood is going on as usual. Fishing is done throughout the year in the nearby streams, especially by the womenfolk.

3. 2. To an outsider the general view of the village will be somewhat peculiar. During the last decade a number of modern factories have been built up within the village. At the back of the factory buildings

**Table 1.1. Normal monthly Maximum and Minimum Temperature in Shade and Rainfall at Gauhati.**

Items	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual average
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
Maximum Temperature	74 .6	78 .0	85 .9	87 .6	87 .7	88 .9	89 .7	90 .3	89 .4	87 .0	81 .3	75 .6	84 .7
Minimum Temperature	23 .7	25 .6	29 .9	30 .9	30 .9	31 .6	32 .1	32 .4	31 .9	30 .6	27 .4	24 .2	29 .3
Rainfall Mm.	0.38	1.17	1.99	5.71	9.29	12.30	12.28	10.26	6.59	2.78	0.55	0.16	63.46
	9 .7	29 .7	50 .5	145 .0	236 .0	312 .4	311 .9	260 .6	167 .4	70 .6	14 .0	4 .1	1612 .0

Source :—India, 1961. Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

some very haphazardly built small houses of traditional type can be seen. This looks more like a slum or 'Basti' rather than a village. Towards the eastern side a number of houses are built in a compact area giving a rural appearance to the village. Without this rural setting, it is difficult to find a rural character in this village.

3. 3. The Shillong - Gauhati Road which is a National Highway has divided the village into two. Though the condition of the Shillong-Gauhati Road is very good, that of the village paths is very unsatisfactory. No proper care is taken to improve these village paths. During the summer season some portion of these paths becomes muddy.

3. 4. The majority of the houses of the village are small and two-roofed. The roofs are thatched with sungrass and the walls are made of bamboo splits. The mudfloor is generally kept neat and clean. From the housing condition itself one can have an idea of the poor level of living of the majority of the people. Of course, some of the villagers have constructed a few modern houses with C. I. sheet roofs and brick-walls. Constructions of some such houses were in progress at the time of our survey. In most of the households, area covered by the dwelling house, granary, cow-shed and other houses is surrounded by a bamboo fence.

#### 4. The People

4. 1. Dispur presents a typical fringe-society, a society in transition. The original inhabitants of the village are the Kacharis (Bodo), a tribal community. In the past they led, more or less, a life of isolation and maintained very little contacts with the outside world. But during the last 6 years, people from various parts of the State and even from different States of India have taken settlement in the village. The original inhabitants, though retaining their identity, are now adjusting themselves to the new environment. It is, however, interesting to note that some families of Dispur left the village and migrated to the interior. The main reason of such emigration seems to be the problem of adjustment to the socio-economic condition of an urbanised village.

4.2. The rural people generally adjust themselves to new environment gradually. In the case of Dispur, a tradition-bound tribal society is experiencing the tremendous influence of the complex culture of a growing city. Drastic changes in the demographic condition and to some extent, in the socio-economic structure are therefore, inevitable. From the re-survey data, we can have a picture of how a backward community is reacting to the new economic opportunities and adjusting themselves to the new environment.

4.3. The demographic characteristics of Dispur represent an urbanised society. The details of demographic characteristics of the village are dealt in a subsequent chapter. But it may be noted here that the population of the village is now extremely heterogeneous. Though the Kacharis and the Koches are still dominant groups, caste Hindus, other Backward classes, Nepalis, Muslims and Christians have also taken settlement in the village within the last few years. In addition, there is a large number of floating people who are employed in the factories and such other works in and around the village. Because of the urban character of the area, the villagers are engaged in diverse set of occupations. Dispur has, thus, lost the integrating character of a rural society.

## 5. Social Divisions

5.1. The Kacharis are proud of their tradition and past glory. The Kachari Community is divided into 12 major endogamous divisions according to their social position. The Kacharis of Dispur belong to *Swargiari*, *Basumatari*, *Doimari* and *Khankharari* groups. *Swargiari*s are said to be heavenly people and they now belong to a priestly class. In old days, none of its members worked as cultivators. The *Basumatari*s also belong to a higher group and they were once the owners of land. *Doimari*s are the owners of water and they performed the death ceremonies. *Khankharari*s belong to lower social status and in old days they had to prepare the burial place. Such social hierarchy is vanishing very rapidly and social divisions according to occupation are now disfavoured by the society.

5.2. The Koches form the second important community in the village. Among the Koches the social status is dependent on the economic position. Both the Kacharis and the Koches generally perform their religious ceremonies independently. Some of the orthodox families among the Koches do not like to dine with the Kacharis. Excepting the Kacharis and the Koches, other communities are yet to form distinct social groups.

## 6. Socio-religious activities in the Village

6.1. Dispur is a semi-tribal Hinduised village. Excepting a few Muslim and Christian households, all other households profess Hinduism as their religion. Although the Kacharis in the village profess Hinduism they follow traditional customs in many respects. The Koches form an important Hindu caste in Assam and their religious ceremonies are not different from those of the other high caste Hindus.

6.2. The socio-religious life of the people of Assam, especially that of the tribal communities is very colourful. In village Dispur a marked

urban influence in this respect was noticed. Some traditional socio-religious ceremonies are now being condensed to less expensive ones. 'The Beltola Bodo Sanskar Committee' has made certain notable reforms in the traditional customs of the Kacharis. The whole society is now expected to follow the reformed rules as strictly as possible and breach of it is followed by heavy fines.

6.3. Monogamy appears to be the prevalent system of marriage in Dispur, although Polygamy is also allowed among the Kacharis. Formerly marriage by capture was generally approved in the Kachari Society. This is now disfavoured in this village and according to the agreed rules the offenders are heavily fined. This may be considered as an important reform in recent years, because such marriages generally lead to the formation of rival groups in the village.

6.4. Some of the elaborate marriage ceremonies are also abandoned by the Kacharis of this area. The regular and traditional type of marriage among the Kacharis is the negotiated type known as 'Daitkup'. When a boy and a girl decide to marry each other, the parents of the boy arrange the marriage through an elaborate process of negotiations with the parents of the girl. The boy's party had to go to girl's house several times with presents of meat, rice-beer, betelnuts and betel-leaves etc. for the entertainment of the relatives of the girl. Sometimes it continued for years together. The process of marriage settlement was so lengthy that, it is said, had it been lower animals instead of men, the road leading to the bride's house would have been muddy during the period of negotiation. This type of marriage was very costly and time-consuming. The actual marriage ceremony itself continued for 7 days. The whole process of marriage is now simplified in each step through the efforts of the *Bodo Sanskar Committee*. The reformed simple type of marriage is known as 'Bor-bia' ('Bor' means big and 'Bia' means marriage). The expenditure for such a marriage varies from Rs. 300.00 to Rs. 500.00. For the very poor families much more simplified marriage type is evolved by the above mentioned society known as 'Ghortula-haba' (gathering for the establishment of a new household). In this type Rs. 80.00 only is to be paid to the villagers for the marriage feast. Formerly one could not imagine of performing a marriage ceremony at such a low cost. The custom of taking bride-price (*ga-dhon*, 'ga' means body, 'dhon' means money) is also disfavoured now, and one who insists on it can claim Rs. 16.00 only.

6.5. Widow marriage is allowed among the Kacharis of the village. A Kachari widow generally marries her deceased husband's younger

brother. Child marriage is unknown to them. The method of divorce is very simple, but it should be approved by the Council of village elders. A Kachari generally treats his wife as an equal to him. But when they decide to divorce each other a betel-leaf is torn (*'Fathoi fesinai'* or *'Panchira chiri'*) and after that the divorce is secured. But one cannot secure a divorce without a valid cause, and an offender in such a case is to pay the compensation as fixed by the village elders. At present divorce is not common in the village.

6. 6. The death ceremony among the Kacharis is also an elaborate affair. The dead bodies of adults are burnt and those of young ones are buried. The bereaved family observes taboo on fish and oil for 8 days. On the 8th day a simple ceremony is performed followed by an elaborate ceremony on the 15th day when a feast is given to the villagers and relatives. In the funeral feast of an well-to-do family one pig, rice-beer (of atleast half a maund of rice), about 12 cocks, 10 seers of powdered rice etc. are required. Fish is collected by the villagers themselves for the feast. The poor families can perform the ceremony in a simple way. The villagers also help the family in all possible ways.

6. 7. The Kacharis are gradually being merged into the broad Hindu fold. The various Hindu gods and goddesses are worshiped by the Kacharis. Some of the gods might have even tribal origin. There is a *'Siva'* Temple in the adjacent village and the villagers of Dispur worship the deity there. *'Bathau'* (Siva) is the major deity and in every Kachari house-hold *'Siju'* trees (a kind of cactus) which are believed to be the abodes of *'Bathau'* are seen in the courtyard. At the beginning of the summer season (in the month of Zeth, i e May-June) the Kacharis of the whole village perform *'Ainam puja'* and *'Bat bhelta puja'* on the river side. Both these ceremonies are performed concurrently. On the first day, the *'Ainam Puja'* is performed to prevent smallpox and on the second day the *'Bat bhelta puja'* is performed to drive away evil spirits from the village. In both the worships, cocks and goats are sacrificed. Another important ceremony is *'Daini-puja'* which is performed at the beginning of the month of *'Kati'* (October-November) to destroy the insects which might destroy paddy crop in the field. The driving away of mosquitos in the month of December is another simple ceremony performed by the villagers. All the communities of the village celebrate the *'Bihu'* festivals which are celebrated twice during the year, once in the middle of January and again in the middle of April. In various village ceremonies all communities take part.

6. 8. There is a community prayer hall called *Namghar* in the village. This is open to both tribal and non-tribal people of this village. In the

last two years, the villagers celebrated the 'Durga puja'. It is said that all the villagers took interest in this festival: *Saraswati puja* is performed by the school students within the village. Much more interest is shown by the villagers in these festivals than in their traditional ones. In Assam plains as a whole, these festivals are gaining importance gradually.

## 7. Village Leadership and Village Administration

7.1. Traditional leaders have immense influence in a tribal society. But in a semi-urban society of Dispur, a traditional leader is bound to lose importance. In Kachari society a man from *Swargiari* or *Basumatari* clan is selected as the village chief, known in their dialect as '*hadingara*'. The present '*hadingara*' of the village belongs to '*Swargiari*' clan and is a very influential man of the village. The same *hadingara* is also a Government-nominated headman (*gaonbura*). Though in some ways he is very traditional-minded, his social activities have convinced the people that he is a leader in the true sense of the term. Only two years back he promised a handsome donation for the village High School and he has already donated the major part. Among the Koches a retired '*Mandal*' (Govt. Surveyor) is found to be influential and at one time he took a very active interest in village developmental activities.

7.2. Amongst the younger section a number of village leaders can be identified. Within the Kachari community there are four enlightened youths who have been associated with various developmental activities in the village. One of them is the headmaster of the village M. E. School. Two others are rich owner cultivators and the fourth one is a mason. Among the Koches three enthusiastic persons were found to take interest in the village developmental activities. Among them a school teacher of the Local L. P. School is respected by all. Among the recent settlers a '*Kannongoe*' (a Senior Government Surveyor) has attained a key position, which is due mainly to his official status.

7.3. Formerly, the social and economic hierarchy was not very marked in Dispur village. But in the recent years a section of the villagers has become rich abruptly. It is mainly due to the fact that for the rapid expansion of Gauhati, the land value of Dispur has increased and some of the villagers sold some plots of their land at high prices. The money received in this way is spent in construction of houses and some other non-agricultural enterprises. As a result the apparent economic equality of former days is gradually being lost. The villagers are becoming individualistic. But the enlightened people are found working in unison for the welfare of the village.

7. 4. The village is administered by '*Dispur Gaon Panchayat*' since 1956. The Panchayat is formed under Assam Panchayat Act and has 11 elected members. It has so far decided 5 criminal cases and also has taken up many welfare activities. The expenditure of the Panchayat during 1960-61 was about Rs. 3500.00 major portion of which was spent in construction of roads, water supply and on secretary's salary. The activities of this Gram Panchayat is reported to be quite satisfactory. The villagers are not much litigation-minded. There was a case of robbery in 1958 and a theft in 1961. At the time of the resurvey the Village Defence Party kept watch on the village at night.

7. 5. The Kacharis decide the socio-religious disputes in their traditional village council of elders known as '*mel*'. Such matters are not referred to Gram Panchayat. Petty cases of criminal nature are also taken up by the '*mel*'. The '*hadingara*' presides over the '*mel*' and he is assisted by other elderly members. The other non-tribal villagers also refer petty cases to the '*mel*'. But the traditional village council is losing its importance gradually.

### 8. Educational Facilities.

8. 1. Compared to the normal facilities available in a rural area, the educational facilities of the village is quite satisfactory. Within the village there is a Basic L. P. School, an M. E. School and a recently established High English School. Before 1954, there was only one L. P. School in the village. In 1954 a Junior Basic School and the M. E. School were established. The H. E. School was established in 1959, which is now housed in a temporary building. The H. E. School may be considered as an extension of the M. E. School and only two classes, VII and VIII, were opened by the time of investigation. Facilities of college education and even university education are available to the students of the village at Gauhati and Jhalukbari, which can be reached easily by the City Bus services.

8.2. The condition of the L. P. and the M. E. School is somewhat satisfactory. Both of these school buildings are C. I. Sheet roofed. The M. E. School is Government aided and the L. P. School is under Basic Education Board. All the villagers whole-heartedly cooperated in establishing the H. E. School by their contributions in cash and kind. The village headman (*gaonbura*) has promised for the school, a donation of about 60 thousand rupees of which he has contributed the major amount. Moreover, two businessmen of Gauhati have also donated nearly 1 acre of land for the school. Now a good building is in the process of construction and it is expected to be completed within a year or two. The school

is not getting any grant from any source, but it is expected that it will be taken up by the Government as it is situated in the tribal belt.

8. 3. The number of students and average attendance of Beltola M. E. School is shown yearwise in the following table :—

**Table 1. 2. Enrolment at Beltola M. E. School, 1955 and 1957-58 to 1960-61.**

Number of students.	Years				
	1955	1957-58	1958-59	1959-60	1960-61
Male	33	62	59	70	71
Female	Nil	14	12	13	20
Total	33	76	71	83	91
Average attendance	60%	75%	51%	56%	66%

The number of students is gradually increasing year by year. At the beginning (i.e. in 1955) there was no female student in the whole M. E. School, but in 1961 there were 20 girls in all the classes, most of whom are tribals. Excluding the year 1957-58, the average attendance in the school is very poor. The school attendance becomes much poorer during the peak season of agriculture.

8.4. The number of students and average attendance of the village H. E. School is shown in the following table yearwise :—

**Table 1. 3. Enrolment at Gopal Boro H. E. School 1956-1961.**

Number of Students	Years		
	1959	1960	1961
Male	9	24	34
Female	2	6	6
Total	11	30	40
Average attendance.	80%	70%	70%

The number of students in the H. E. School is gradually increasing, but for a High English School the number is really meagre. It is difficult to attract students to such a venture school, especially when well-established High Schools are situated in a nearby town. Moreover, in the Government-aided Schools of Assam the tuition fees are not payable by scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students. So the people of these communities would prefer to send their boys and girls to Government-aided institutions. There are at present four teachers, one of whom is a graduate. The need of a good High English School in the area was long felt and it is expected that this venture High School will be a big institution in future. The High School is expected to cater to the needs of the neighbouring areas of the Beltola Mouza.

### 9. Other Public Institutions.

9.1. A small Library was established in the village in the year 1954 in a temporary house, with nominal aids from the Community Development Project and the Education Department. It is reported that at the beginning some of the villagers took active interest for the development of the library. They collected subscriptions and procured books for the Library from the public. At the time of first point survey in 1955, the Library was functioning satisfactorily. But at the time of resurvey in 1961, the villagers forgot all about the Library and even the whereabouts of the books were unknown. From the year 1959, the Dimoria Community Development Block, situated 16 miles away from the village, has been giving aid in the forms of books and articles of games for the youth club. At the time of resurvey a small reading room was under construction.

9.2. Recreation facilities within the village are very limited. A football ground is under construction for the village school students. Like other villages, the socio-religious functions are observed in holiday mood. Villagers participate in the religious and cultural ceremonies like Bihu, Durga Puja etc. in the town. In recent years, some festivals (i.e. Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja) have also been performed in the village. The villagers are naturally attracted by cinema-shows in the town and a good number of them enjoy it, especially in the festive occasions. Recreation facilities of the nearby town is easily available to the villagers and many persons avail these opportunities. In the year 1959, one villager purchased a costly transistor radio set for his home. A daily newspaper is subscribed by the M. E. School. In recent years the villagers organised a 'yatra' party which performs 'yatra' (Open air theatre) in the village.

### 10. Co-operative Societies :

10.1. The history of the Cooperative enterprise in the village may be taken as a typical example of failure of Cooperative Movement in the

State. It is not that the villagers are not cooperative minded, but the organisers themselves are insincere and inexperienced in such matters. A Cooperative organisation cannot be successful if it is not taken up very sincerely at last by the organisers. The villagers now have a bitter experience of these societies. Anyhow, experiment is going on in some cooperative undertakings.

10.2 The *Dispur Jatiya Multipurpose Cooperative Society* which was established in 1956 had to be closed down in 1960 due to fire havoc in the house of the Secretary causing destruction to all the records. This is now being liquidated. Under this society there were 4 hand-pounding instruments (*Dhenki*) from which the village widows were very much benefitted. The aim of the Society was to get rice for consumption and sale and to give employment to poor widows. To encourage the society, a subsidy of annas six per maund of paddy was given by the Government for the benefit of the workers.

10.3. Another Co-operative venture named '*Dispur Jatiya Gaonlia Bank*' is functioning in the village from the year 1957. There are 25 members with the total paid-up share capital of Rs. 125.00 only. The bank has secured a loan of Rs. 5,700/- from the Community Development Block. The main object of the village bank is to give loan to needy cultivators to improve their agriculture. Loans of Rs. 500/- each were given to 11 members and Rs. 200/- to another member.

## 11. **Medical facilities and Health.**

11.1. The general condition of health in Dispur seems to be quite satisfactory. The natural drainage system of the village on the one hand, and the increasing Public Health facilities in the surrounding areas on the other, might be the contributing factors. The incidence of epidemic diseases like Cholera, Malaria, Small Pox is not much. It is reported that Kala-azar and Malaria were common diseases in the recent past. Kala-azar is practically wiped out and Malaria is also in the process of eradication.

11.2. The rural people, and more especially the tribal people, try to cure diseases by their traditional methods. Evil spirits are supposed to cause diseases and they are propitiated by sacrifices. But with the spread of education and contact with other people they are now gradually turning to modern medicine.

11.3. Medical facilities available at Gauhati is perhaps the best available in Assam and the people of Dispur may avail these facilities without

much expenses. There is also a Government dispensary at a distance of 2 miles from the village at Beltala. One qualified compounder lives within the village and his charge per call is Re. 1/ only. One qualified homoeopath has also opened a pharmacy in the village very recently. The importance of village quacks (*Bez*) seems to be diminishing. At the time of first point survey there were 4 quacks in the village, and now there are only two.

11.4. There are 4 ring wells, 1 Kutcha well and 2 tube wells in the village. Water is available throughout the year from these wells. Although the villagers use this water for drinking purpose, the quality of water seems to be unsatisfactory. There is no caste or community restrictions in the use of wells. D. D. T. is sprayed in the village at 6 months' interval by the National Malaria Eradication Department. Only 4 houses have latrines in the village.

## 12 Veterinary Facilities.

12.1. The villagers are not attracted to the facilities offered by the Veterinary Department. There is a good veterinary hospital at Gauhati and the State Veterinary College is situated at Khanapara at a distance of about 2 miles south of the village. There is also a cattle farm at Khanapara where improved type of breeding bulls are kept. The importance of an improved breeding bull is not felt by the villagers. The cattle and the poultry birds kept by the villagers are of inferior types. Pigs are kept by a few Kachari families. But it is complained that the pigs destory paddy in the field.

## 13. Tenancy System and Land Value.

13.1. In the Assam plains, *Ryotwari* type of temporary settlement which is subject to periodic assessment is in vogue. Land is held under four systems viz. Periodic *Khiraj*, Annual *Khiraj*, *Nisfkhiraj* and *Lakhiraj*. Under Periodic *Khiraj* land is held as full revenue-paying, permanent heritable and transferable land. In Annual *Khiraj*, there is no permanent right and the land cannot be transferred. The *Nisfkhiraj* is half revenue-paying and *Lakhiraj* is revenue free land. Both *Nisfkhiraj* and *Lakhiraj* were created during the Ahom Rule and recognised as such by the British.

13.2. In Dispur village, land is held under two systems—periodic *Khiraj* and annual *Khiraj*. The land holders of both the types sublet their land. In subletting of agricultural land '*Adhi*' system (share-cropping on 50:50 basis) is still prevalent. Cash rent and fixed kind rent are also practised.

The share-croppers have not been benefitted by the recent Adhjar Act and according to the villagers the condition is becoming unfavourable to tenants.

13.3. The value of land in the Dispur area has been increasing very rapidly year after year. In 1960, the land value has gone upto forty thousand rupees per acre. A few villagers sold their land within the last five years. As a substantial portion of the village land is owned by absentee landlords, several tenants were dispossessed of land by the owners living outside the village. These lands are mostly sold to industrial concerns. The total land of the village sold to outsiders since 1956 is 21.24 acres, which is 10.7% of the total geographical area of the village. But this figure is not the whole picture as full data on land transfer could not be collected. It may be noted that out of the total land sold, 91.7% are agricultural and 8.3% non-agricultural. All the agricultural land sold are now used for non-agricultural purposes.

#### **14. Crop Pattern and Agricultural Methods.**

14.1. The cropping pattern is still a traditional one. It is expected for such a village to grow more vegetables for which there is easy marketing facilities. Some cash crops could have easily been introduced. But the villagers are found to be somewhat apathetic towards intensive and improved cultivation.

14.2. Paddy is the main crop grown and no improved methods are used in its cultivation. Winter Paddy or 'Sali' (both fine and coarse variety) is transplanted in July-August and harvested in December-January. A few families grow Autumn Paddy or 'Ahu' which is sown in March-April and harvested in July- August. The method of double cropping seems to be unpopular. The land used for 'Ahu' is generally not used for 'Sali' paddy cultivation as is being usually done in many other parts of Assam. Mixed Cropping is unknown. Vegetables grown are generally of inferior varieties and are meant for home consumption only. No cash crop is grown in the village though there is enough scope for that. Manure and fertilizers are rarely used.

#### **15. Other Enterprises :**

15.1. In a semi-urbanised village non-agricultural economic opportunities are bound to increase day by day. But the majority of the villagers in Dispur could not avail these opportunities. The traditional occupation like weaving of cloth is being continued without any improvement. The womenfolk still weave their garments in their looms, but they are more attracted towards mill-made clothes, and as a result, importance of weaving



as an art and occupation is dwindling. The poorer section collects firewood from the hills and sells it in the market. But there is now restriction from the Forest Department and a 'Pass' is to be obtained by paying necessary fees, for collection of firewood.

15.2. Some of the villagers have now opened grocery shops and *pan* shops, but they are of the opinion that it is difficult to compete with outsiders in such business. A few of them are also keeping rickshaws for hire, which is also said to be not a paying business for them. Employment opportunities have increased much within last few years. But the industrial concerns have not employed anyone from the village as they require only skilled or semi-skilled persons. But one can easily earn 2 to 3 rupees a day by casual labour in and around the village. Employment opportunities in agriculture has not improved at all. It may be noted in this connection that some of the villagers earn some amount by selling country liquor and rice-beer prepared at home. Although the village falls in the dry belt (where prohibition is in force) there are good opportunities for such illegal transactions in this area situated near the border of K. & J. Hills District where prohibition has not been enforced. As Gauhati is a dry area there are enough customers within and outside the village for home-made liquor. Our investigators had opportunities to see sale of such liquor in a few households. Even the enlightened ones admitted that country liquor must be supplied to the labourers as perquisites for getting good works from them. For obvious reasons, no account could be given of the magnitude of such transactions as villagers would not like to disclose this fact and any question on this matter would have created hostilities towards our investigators.

## 16. Marketing Facilities.

16. 1. Gauhati provides a ready market for whatever the villagers have to sell. Moreover, the Beltola 'Hat' where market is held weekly is at a distance of about 2 miles from the village. Some of the families of Dispur purchase their weekly provisions from this 'hat'. Those who sell firewood and other articles at Gauhati, purchase their necessities, from the town.

## 17. Prices.

17.1. The study of behaviour of prices of essential commodities for a particular period of time, or at least of the two points of time would have been of some interest. But we have no data for the years under study and even price data on first point survey are not available. The prices of some essential commodities in Dispur in December 1961 is given in Table 1.4.

**Table 1.4 Prices of Certain Essential Commodities in Dispur, 1961.**

<i>Commodities.</i>	<i>Standard Unit</i>	<i>Prices. Rs.</i>
1. Paddy	per maund	10.00
2. Rice	per maund	22.00
3. Salt	per seer	0.19
4. Kerosene (Brown)	per seer	0.44
5. Arahar	per seer	0.75
6. Masur	per seer	0.69
7. Mati Kalai (black gram)	per seer	0.50
8. Mustard Oil	per seer	2.50
9. Sugar	per seer	1.12
10. Gur	per seer	0.75
11. Potato	per seer	0.56
12. Onion	per seer	0.62
13. Soap	per seer	1.50
14. Tea	per seer	6.00
15. Match Box	each	0.06

At the time of re-survey there was no scarcity of essential commodities and all these items were available in the village shops.

### 18. Forces of Change.

18.1. The forces of change and their effects on the village economy are discussed in the concluding chapter. The extent of urbanisation can be guessed only from the following facts. At the time of first point survey there was only one small grocery shop and one 'pan' shop within the village. Now there are 3 big grocery shops, 4 tea stalls, 5 pan shops, 1 sweet-meat shop, 1 meat shop, 1 tailoring shop, 1 cycle repairing shop, 1 carpentry shop and 1 Homoco Pharmacy. One or two vegetable hawkers also sit by the side of the road daily. Moreover, a number of new industrial concerns have been established within the village and sites for several other industrial enterprises have been selected in this area. The Gauhati Veterinary College is now shifted from Gauhati to Khanapara, only about 2 miles away from the village. The site for Gauhati Medical College is also selected between Gauhati and Dispur village. All these indicate that the village is fast losing its rural character. It is apprehended that within the next five to ten years no trace of rural outlook will be noticed in the village and there will not be any scope to resurvey the village as a rural unit.

**Agro-Economic Research Centre For North East India**

**Jorhat : Assam**

Reports Completed

**A. Socio-Economic Studies in Rural Change :**

**(I) First Point Village Surveys :**

1. Kanther Terang : A Jhum Village in the Mikir Hills, Assam.  
(Mimeographed).
2. Kathaliacherra : A Jhumia Settlement Colony in Tripura,  
(Unpublished).
3. Morangaon : A plains Village in the Sibsagar District,  
Assam. (Unpublished).
4. Mawnum : A Khasi Village in the K. & J. Hills  
District, Assam. (Mimeographed)
5. Khonajan : A Plains Village in the Lakhimpur District,  
Assam. (Mimeographed).
6. Chalihagaon : A Plains Village in Sibsagar District,  
Assam. (Mimeographed).
7. Banshidua : A Garo Village in the Garo Hills District,  
Assam ( To be mimeographed ).
8. Hmunpui : A Jhum Village in the Mizo District,  
Assam. ( To be mimeographed ).

**(II) Village Resurveys :**

9. Dispur : A Plains Village near Gauhati, Assam.  
(Published, Price Rs. 8.00)
10. Chotahaibor : A Plains Village in Nowgong, Assam.  
(Mimeographed).

**B. Ad-hoc Studies :**

11. State Trading in Paddy in Assam. (Unpublished).
12. Changing Pattern of Village Leadership in N. E India.  
(Unpublished).
13. Changes in Conditions of Agricultural Labour (Unpublished).
- 14 & 15. Assessment of Cooperative Farming in Assam.—  
First & Second Rounds (Mimeographed).
16. Working of Fair Price Shops for Foodgrains in Assam.  
(Mimeographed).
17. Farmers' Response to Improved Agricultural Practices Under  
I. A. D. P. (Mimeographed)
18. Behaviour of Agricultural Prices in Assam, 1952-64.  
(Mimeographed).
19. The Rice Economy of Manipur 1952—65 ( Mimeographed )