

AN EXPLORATION
IN THE ROLE OF FAITH
AS
CONTRIBUTORY TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

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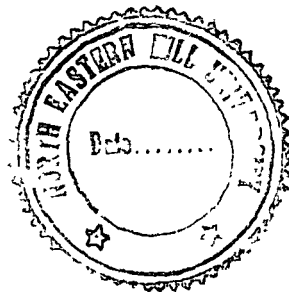
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

"At what time of infinity Adam and Eve desired fellowship communioned by the wise serpent to receive the bounty of the unknown Father of the Universe - the sweet sour apple to transfuse in the flesh and blood of this princely couple to lead them to the bondage through Karma - one does not know yet. The Swayambhu Manu (was he the cosmic son of the creator Brahma?) plunged into his Karma not touched by the evils of Karma because he only performed his assignment at the command of his master. The Karma that was conceived in the womb of desire nourished by lust heightened by greed is a different one that Manu pursued. My Karma is predetermined, my life is predestined, I do not need another fetter while I am in the cage".¹

The Karma alone brings prosperity and the prosperity gives the inclination to pleasure - thus one suffers from the pain of irrevocable rebirth. But the great faiths differ from one another - the avarice is sin, the begging alms is sin; the noble work is the accumulation of wealth for distribution to the less privileged. The 'Karma' doctrine is not followed by mendicants and sanayasis, for fear of being entangled with worldly things. In a land where 'Karma' without 'Jnana' is a licence to bondage; the ignorance helps to turn away from Karma. Many unfortunates lured by the galaxy of stars to be one with them, the pursuit of Karma is not taken as 'calling' (as propounded by Calvin) or as 'glorification' of God (as ordained by Puritans). Even the Koran advocates accumulation of wealth through trade and commerce not for one's own pleasure but for the needy. This is the only way to understand the compassion of Merciful Allah. The adherents of Jainism did not take the primitive

agrarian vocation to keep themselves away from destructive process.

Thus, religions are no impediments to economic progress but they become
so when there is mechanism for implementing distributive justice. The all /
 powerful church who fought to the last to have its own kingdom over the
 temporal kingdom, could punish the usurers, greedy money lenders by excommu-
 nication; did more than the court of chancery throughout the ages. The west
 is lucky to have Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Erasmus and man like Kant and
 Spinoza who remotely supported the religious ethics and vehemently exercised
their influence upon the mass for gaining social justice. Indian Sankaracharya
 involved himself in the grammer of dualism, while Kabir, Nanak and Sankardev
 did try a lot to imbibe love and justice for all. Did they succeed?

In this essay, as the title of the study indicates, we have with all earnest-
 ness made an attempt to find and to investigate whether religion plays a specific
role in economic progress. In this study we are taking only a few aspects
 of temporal nature that ~~they~~ thought to be contributory to economic progress.
 We have only a limited data on economic variables relating to demography
 such as size of family, educational status, family income, consumption of speci-
 fic goods, news media and some other practices of religious nature belonging
 to two principal communities - the Hindus and the Muslims live very closely
 in the urban setting.

In chapter two, we are devoted to give a brief review of the related
 literature about the influence of religious faith on economic prosperity both
 in the developed and underdeveloped countries. In this chapter, we have
 discussed about the impact of different religious faiths on economics and also
 the impact of social and economic change on religion.}

Chapter three is concerned with the socio-economic and religious structure of Assam since the early times.

This chapter is divided into seven parts. Part one deals with the pre-historic account of Assam. In part two, we have discussed about the religious transition in Assam from the early period to pre-independence. And part three relates to the present status of religion in Assam. Part four of this chapter is devoted to economic development of Assam from the early period to the 19th century, i.e. to the advent of the Britishers. In part five we have attempted to give a picture of modern economic development in Assam. In part six, we have explained some of the social institutions, some of which are of religious nature and their influence on Assamese society both in the ear and present period. And lastly part seven deals with the conclusions of this chapter.

Chapter four deals with the data base and analysis. We have discussed how data are collected and why we have selected the particular locality for our study. We have also mentioned about the other socio-economic determinants such as size of family, consumption expenditure, income, political participati habits of prayer, news media, education, occupation which could promote or hinder the economic prosperity of a country. For empirical analysis we have used Probit analysis by considering religion as stimuli and consumption as the reaction. We have also applied the Reaction Function Approach as proposed by Bez.

Some tables of data and graphical representations are given.

Finally, chapter five is devoted to conclusions and epilogue.

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CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Social rigidities - religion, caste, traditional fatalistic attitudes, social rituals, superstitious practices, political and linguistic issues, legal institutions, etc. are common features of social enigma and they are also crucially antithesis of economic development and rational distribution of wealth and prosperity. Social rigidities are not only common to ancient and religion-ridden underdeveloped countries, but also a common feature even in developed countries of the West in their early stages of development. No one can ignore the interdependence of social, cultural, psychological, political and religious factors on manifold economic development. Economic prosperity is a complex process. Economic prosperity will proceed rapidly only when the dominant social values favour activities which are economically productive and conducive to capital accumulation and technical progress. The people of a country can achieve progress through economic development only when their social, economic, legal and political institutions are favourable to it.

In spite of inherent social rigidities ^x insinuated by religion, yet religion is the most substantial bond of mankind. It is the core cultural tradition of people that makes them live their lives with a set of beliefs, either to enrich their spiritual lives (or their material prosperity). Since transmigration is the reality not only for mankind but also for other tangibles and intangibles, the fear for unforeseen power nearly subjugate all human beings to believe in God, or a super natural force.

Religion is a subject of great concern, not only in an underdeveloped

society but even in an advanced society of today. It is based on simple faith. It exercises a more profound influence over one's thought and behaviour from time to time. Faith on religion is transmitted to man from generation to generation through tradition, as a part of his culture. He learns to believe in supernatural power of God.

*No religion can be understood except in its cultural and socio-economic context as religion never exist as an abstract essence, but in a society. To Marx 'Man makes religion, religion does not make man. "... This state, this society produce religion ... It is the fantastic realisation of the human essence because the human essence has not true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against the world of which religion is the spiritual aroma.*³⁾ In this context we may opt to say that 'there is a moral and religious as well as material environment, which sets its stamp on the individual, even when he is least conscious of it. The economic categories of modern society such as prosperity, freedom of contact and competition are as much as a part of its intellectual furniture as its political conceptions and, together with religion, have probably been the most potent force in giving its character."¹²⁾

Religious belief needs to be reformed in order to breakdown inhibitions and obstacles to development. Yet there are those unfortunate few who refused to become a professor for fear of exposure and to remain as a petty craftman to be alive with the self such as one remark "God has become a name of carnage, theology a permanent controversy, glory was arrogance and faith persecution."¹¹⁾

Religion influences the whole life of the individual and of the community. According to Max Weber, "the religious atmosphere of the community and the home determines the choice of occupation and through it the professional career. Due to the intrinsic character of religious belief the protestants have

Weber does not refer to econ. dev.

6

an tendency to develop economically which is absent among the Catholics and not because of historical-political situation."¹³ (Therefore, it is quite clear to say from the remark of Max Weber that religious factors are superior to other factors which determine economic development of a country. R.H. Tawney also agreed with Max Weber in this respect.

Religious belief usually acts as a tremendous force for social inertia. Religious beliefs and practices have been a universal feature of human society and the religious attitudes influence the economic development. As it is a common belief that 'where Religion is, there God is.' In Weber's view religious attitudes influence the economic development. In the 'Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism', Max Weber states "I consider the influence of economic development on the fate of religious ideas to be very important and shall later attempt to show how in our case the process of mutual adaptation of the two took place. On the other hand, these religious ideas themselves simply cannot be deduced from economic circumstances."¹³ Till the 16th century, the economic society of the West was dominated by the Church and religion. In western democracies, the belief to work honestly, to do social services and to do good to others, to accumulate wealth and to invest in industrial enterprises was fostered through protestant ethic, for which a vigorous discipline was maintained in the beginning and that spirit is still working. In the English culture the protestant ethics encourage the capital accumulation and business expansion and the result is the rapid economic development. On the other hand, in the French Canadian Culture, due to the existence of Catholicism leads to the rising of a large family and pursuing agricultural occupation. This traditional orientation was fostered primarily by the leaders of the most influential institution, the Roman Catholic Church. To protect its power, and to protect its

followers, the Roman Catholic Church sought to isolate the French Community as much as possible from the influence of economic development by encouraging the traditional rural agrarian economy. The study of interrelationship of economics and religion is of great significance in order to know the whole of social activity.

Religious sanctions are generally irrational, for they are superstitious; irrational belief sanctioned by religion are also present among the educated class. Religion is characterised on the moral sanction of this world. In Karl Marx's view "Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its spiritualistic point d' honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its universal source of consolation and justification."³ In particular, social and economic stratification is accorded the sanction of religion. For example, in Denmark, there is a tax imposed by the Church as .01% of taxable income. The attitudes, institutions and mode of living and working that make up this stratification do constitute very real inhibitions and obstacles to economic prosperity. Social change springs largely from economic forces. As economics, society, politics and religion are inter-connected, therefore, religion will change when social and economic changes take place and the economic and social change will occur when changes in religion take place, since man makes religion (Marx). According to R.H. Tawney, "theology had a powerful impact on economics and brought forth the impact of religion on business vis-a-vis the impact of social and economic change on religion."¹²

Religion plays an important role on the economic as well as socio-political development not only in the underdeveloped countries but also in the

developed countries of the world. The historical evolution of the western countries revealed the dominance of the church and the religious leaders till the 16th century, and still it continues in some parts of the world. In 'Religion and Rise of Capitalism', Tawney wrote 'The papacy was, in a sense, the greatest financial institution of the Middle Ages, and as its fiscal system was elaborated, things became, not better, but worse. The abuses which were a trickle in the thirteenth century were a torrent in the fifteenth. And the frailties of Rome, if exceptional in their notoriety, can hardly be regarded as unique. Priests, it is from time to time complained, engage in trade and take usury. Cathedral chapters lend money at high rates of interest. The profits of usury, like those of simony, should have been refused by churchmen as hateful to God, but a Bishop of Paris, when consulted by a usurer as to the salvation of his soul, instead of urging restitution, recommended him to dedicate his ill-gotten wealth to the building of Notre-Dame. 'Thus' exclaimed St. Bernard, as he gazed at the glories of gothic architecture. 'Wealth is drawn up by ropes of wealth, thus money bringth money ... O vanity of vanities, yet no more vain than insance! The church is resplendent in her walls, beggarly in her poor, she clothes her stones in gold, and leaves her son naked.'⁽¹²⁾

Deep faith on religion dominated and still dominates the economic outlook of the people. Warner Sambart stressed the importance of religion in the growth of capitalist economy. He considered that the spirit of capitalism was developed out of states of mind and behaviour.

It is a fact that social rigidities are higher in many of the eastern societies than in the West. The economic framework of the backward countries of the world is dependent on their respective inherited and deep-rooted social,

religious and cultural background, which is not conducive to adopt capitalistic method of production and to accelerate economic development.

Most of the underdeveloped countries of today like India have made attempt to develop, but they have failed to achieve any marked success in this direction. As economic prosperity is a complex process and it is influenced by both the economic and non-economic factors. Non-economic factors are as much important as the economic factors in case of such countries. Out-moded religious outlook and superstitions are blamed for India's economic backwardness. India is a land of heterogenous elements of different religions - Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, different castes, customs, culture and language. Religious belief - customs and taboos play an important role in shaping the activities of the people and affect the economic life. Orthodoxy and faith on religion and traditionalism and conservatism retarded the economic development in many ways. Fatalism and spiritualism of the Hindus and Muslims lead the people to survive at the subsistence level. Max Weber treated traditionalism of Hindus as the deeply ingrained habits of thought and custom which impinged upon a people's ability to accumulate wealth.

We cannot think of a society without taking into account religion and religion without society and in the same way a society can be understood only dealing with its relation to economic and political and cultural conditions. All are related to each other.

Many attempts have been made to know the relationship between religious faiths and society, economics and politics and also to explore the influence of religion on economic development. Religious influences on economic develop-

ment has grown in sociology since Max Weber, though long before Max Weber, Karl Marx was aware of the relationship which exist between religion and capitalism, his studies was mainly dealt with the bourgeois society. In 'Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', Weber explained the problems of relation between religious belief and political ethics, particularly the ethics of economic activity in western society from the 16th century to the present day.

Though individual studies may have a limited scope and may not be capable of illuminating all facts of the problem, yet through a review of literature, it may be possible to piece together the scattered studies in such a manner as will enable us to view the problem in the widest perspectives and its entirety.

2.2 Christianity and Capitalism

The world can broadly be divided into four parts. The first part consists of the people belonging to the religion of the Christ. Christianity is above all, concerned about the inner life of man in God. It is a world religion. Its role in economic development is significant.

In the 'Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', Max Weber explained the relationship between religious belief and political ethics, particularly the ethics of economic activity in western society. According to Weber, the economic ethics favourable to capitalist development was found only in Christianity and to a latter extent in Judaismism.

The religious belief of a society leads to progress or decay, depending upon the nature of such belief. Not only in the backward countries of the world, but also in the advanced countries of today, religion plays a significant role in the early stages of their socio-economic and political development.

R.H. Tawney supported Max Weber that religion had a powerful impact on economics and social progress.

Religious attitudes influence the economic development in several ways. The economic differentiation is the result of the mental and spiritual peculiarities acquired from the environment and more particularly the type of education favoured by the religious atmosphere of the community and the home; which determines the choice of occupation and through it the professional career. Religious movement can create conditions favourable to the growth of new economic civilization.

The spirit of capitalism is closely connected with certain religious ideas. Without a moral and religious driving force, a rapid change could not have occurred. In Germany, France and Hungary, Protestants of a Calvinistic persuasion are likely to take entrepreneurial and managerial roles and take up work in modern large scale organisation than Catholics or Lutheran Protestants. In Max Weber's opinion, the influence of Calvinism was the root cause of economic innovation and economic prosperity of Holland and of England. In this connection we would like to mention the principal dogma of Calvinism, propounded by the Frenchman Jean Calvin, probably a more rational Puritan on the issue of capitalism. It can be summed up as "Calvinism recognised secular activities, political participation and economic enterprise - but only as means to a spiritual end - the glory of God and demonstration of salvation. Material motives are kept under control by rigorous discipline and the limitation of the life of the senses."² Interestingly Calvinism is called also as Christian socialism by many.

Warner Sambart stressed the importance of religion in the growth of

capitalist economy. To him, the main aim of economic activity was accumulation of money. He selected Jews as the carriers of capitalism because he considered them exhibiting capitalist virtues - intelligence, thrift, rationality and the pursuit of money. For him the spirit of capitalism was derived from Jews rather than the Protestants, because their religious precepts upheld rationality long before Christianity did. To R.H. Tawney, religious principles are more powerful to economic ideas. He agreed with Weber that theology had a powerful impact on economics and brought forth the impact of religion on business vis-a-vis the impact of social and economic change on religion. But at the same time there are several points on which Weber's arguments appear to Tawney to be one-sided. In 'Religion and Rise of Capitalism', Tawney described "... and on which Brentaur's criticisms of it seem to me to be sound. Thus (i) as was perhaps inevitable in an essay dealing with economic and social thought, as distinct from changes in economic and social organisation. Weber seems to me to explain by reference to moral and intellectual influences developments which have their principal explanation in another region altogether. There was plenty of the 'Capitalist Spirit' in the fifteenth century Venice and Florence, or in South Germany and Flanders for the simple reason that these areas were the greatest commercial and financial centres of the age, though all were, at least nominally, Catholic. The development of capitalism in Holland and England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was due, not to the fact that they were Protestant powers, but to a large economic movements, in particular the Discoveries (scientific) and the results which flowed from them. Of course, material and psychological changes went together on the first. But it seems a little artificial to talk as though capitalist enterprise could not appear till religious changes had produced a capitalist spirit. It would

be equally true, and equally one-sided, to say that the religious changes were purely the result of economic movements."¹²

Karl Marx also recognised the relationship between economic development and religion. He said "... all man's juristic, political, philosophical, religious and other ideas are derived in the last resort from his economic conditions of life, from his mode of production and of exchanging the product."³

To Max Weber, the spirit of capitalism consists in a rational outlook, not in a traditional outlook. Only a rational outlook towards life gives the incentives to scientific thinking. For example, Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, the Catholics in France, the English Puritans and the branch of English Puritanism which settled in America and constituted the New England, these are the examples which show the occasions where the new attitudes to economic activity broke up the economic traditionalism. Without a moral and religious driving force, rapid change could not have occurred. It is true that a rational, systematic and specialized pursuit of science with trained and specialized personnel has only existed in the West, which is essential for the development of capitalist spirit. According to Weber, the Protestant Reformation produced a new character which created a more vigorous spirit into the attitude of workers and entrepreneurs, which led to the development of modern capitalism. Capitalism exists in China, India, Babylon, in the classical world and in the middle ages, but the peculiar characteristic, i.e. the ethic of the spirit of capitalism is not found in these countries. Modern capitalism is different from other types of economic organization. Weber says - "Capitalistic acquisition as an adventure has been at home in all types of economic society which have known trade with the use of money and which have

offered its opportunities, through commenda, farming of taxes, state loans, financing wars, dual courts and office-holders. Likewise, the inner attitude of the adventurer, which laughs at all ethical limitations, has been universal."¹³

To Tawney, new ideas and changes in the realm of faith and morals as a result of the Reformation paved the way for economic prosperity. With the Reformation, the commercial spirit won over the traditional and social attitudes and brought radical changes in economic system and religious doctrines. All moral scruples were sacrificed in pursuit of profit and adventures in trade. Till the sixteenth century, profits beyond one's wages of labour, avarice, illegitimate trade and usury were regarded as sinful for the society. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, clergy who lent money to persons and received profits beyond the capital sum were deprived from their office. Moreover, manifest usurers were not admitted to communion or christian burial, their offerings were not accepted and the ecclesiastics who failed to punish them were suspended until they were able to satisfy their bishop. The church and religion dominated the western economic society till the sixteenth century. But afterwards, Reformation and the attempts of Calvinism changed the attitudes and outlook of the people. With the growth of Puritanism, traditional restrictions in the name of ethics were swept away and the Puritanism with emphasis on rational thinking and individualism helped in the development of Capitalist spirit. They emphasised the importance of production over consumption, which helped capital accumulation. By 'Spirit of Capitalism', Tawney says "If the capitalist means the direction of industry by the owners of capital for their own pecuniary gain, and the social relation which establish themselves between them and the wage-earning proleteriat who they control, then capitalism had existed on a ground scale both in medieval Italy and in medieval Flanders.

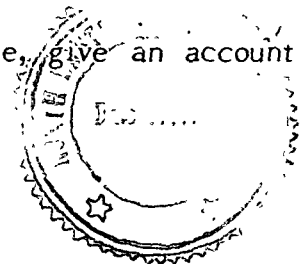
If by the capitalist spirit is meant the temper which is prepared to sacrifice all moral scruples to the pursuit of profit, it had been only too familiar to the saints and sages of the middle ages. It was the economic imperialism of Catholic Portugal and Spain, not the less imposing, if more solid, achievements of the Protestants powers, which impressed contemporaries down to the Armada. It was predominantly Catholic cities which were the commercial capital of Europe, and Catholic bankers who were its leading financiers."¹² Thus, those who banked money also banked ethics; this is true even today.

Warner Sambart also emphasised the importance of religion in the growth of capitalist economy. According to him, the life of spirit was the root cause of capitalistic development. The capitalistic development was attributed to certain urges which forced the bourgeois to undertake the creation of a new world. Sambart considered the Jews in developing the spirit of capitalism.

To Max Weber, the methodical penetration of conduct with religion is considerably more favourable than the traditionalistic faith of orthodox Lutheran for economic progress.

The ultimate aim of life is to earn money by acquisition. But economic acquisition is not at all subordinate to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs, rather it is leading principle of capitalism and this principle is not found in those countries not under capitalistic influence. This principle is closely connected with certain religious ideas. The spirit of capitalism consists in the desire to seek profit continuously for its own sake, as a duty and not for the enjoyment of life. In this context we add Max Weber's view - "Man is only a trustee of the goods which have come to him through God's grace. He must, like the servant in the parable, give an account of

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every penny entrusted to him, and it is at least hazardous to spend any of it for a purpose which does not serve the glory of God but only one's own enjoyment."¹³ Although this is not exclusively a Christian principle, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam profess the same. But owing to lack of organized authoritarian leadership the Hindu monks and folks alike cheated this trusteeships.

According to Weber, the impact of Protestant Christianity on the traditional society dominated by Church and superstition in creating a new rationalistic outlook both among workers and entrepreneurs for capitalistic development is not the least importance. Protestants participation in business is greater than the Catholics and this is one of the reasons that so few Catholics are engaged in capitalistic enterprise as for example in Germany. The participation of Catholics among the skilled labourers is smaller than the Protestants, this is because of their religious character or religious belief. Again the Protestants, both in a ruling class and as a ruled, have a tendency to develop economically, which is not found among Catholics as because of their intrinsic character of religious belief. To express the difference between the faith of Protestants and Catholics, Max Weber explain, "the greater other-worldliness of Catholicism, the ascetic character of its highest ideals must have brought up it adherents to a greater indifference toward the good things of this world."¹³ Again he quoted the remark of Offenbacher to show the attitudes towards economic life between the two faiths - "The Catholic is quieter, having less of the acquisitive impulse; he prefers a life of the greatest possible security, even with a smaller income, to a life of risk and excitement, even though it may bring the chance of gaining honour and riches. The proverbs says jokingly, 'either eat well or sleep well'. In the present case the Protestant prefers to eat well, the Catholic to sleep undisturbed"¹³ - only to some extent proverbial until

the mid-seventeenth century after which the Christian minds were economically integrated.

The Protestant doctrine of the Calling, that a man's primary duty is to think of his everyday work in whatever occupation, as a means by which he should glorify God. His work should be undertaken with the same seriousness and sense of duty as the Catholic monk was encouraged to bring to bear in his special calling. The doctrine of calling is the important factor of economic development.

The doctrine of the rationalization is another factor for economic development of the Protestant Christianity. The Protestantism particularly, Calvinism regards work as a form of prayer and its insistence on work as the only legitimate road to riches would clearly create favourable condition for economic growth. This is the secret of Christianity and which is not found in other religions. Weber also pointed out that the Calvinists or the Puritans were by their religious ideology, prevented from enjoying the fruit of their labour. They were not permitted to spend money on luxury less they faced expulsion from the Church. A man under calvinistic or puritan influence was forced to live on bare subsistence. Therefore, they re-invested their profits in their business, which led to increase in productivity and growth of the society. In Weber's opinion - "every hour lost is lost to labour for the glory of God."¹³ The Calvinists believe that "the chief end of man is to glorify God". Thus inactive contemplation is also valueless, or even directly reprehensible if it is at the expense of one's daily work."¹³

The religious ideals of work, thrift and enrichment without enjoyment and by means of work only, constitute what Weber called 'worldly asceticism'. To the Protestants, work is an intrinsic value, not just a consequence of the

curse of Adam. A man without a calling lacks the systematic, methodical character, which is also demanded by worldly asceticism. According to Weber, "what God demands is not labour in itself, but rational labour in a calling."¹³ Here St. Paul's remark is of great significance. He says, "He who will not work shall not eat; even the wealthy shall not eat without working for even though they do not need to labour to support their own needs, there is God's commandment which they, like the poor, must obey."¹³ A certain calling is necessary for economic development.

In the pre-capitalist society, the activities of traders and financiers were subject to severe condemnation by the Church and popular opinion. But the modern capitalists are careful in calculation of profit and loss in a regular way. They find an ethical and religious value in their daily work and see the wealth as God's blessings on their mode of life. They are a deviant from a tradition and they believe in the ethic of hardwork, systematic in production and trade, frugal in consumption and individual in economic life. The puritan capitalists with its emphasis on hard work, systematic in production and frugal on consumption and its simplicity of life, greatly favoured the rise of production above consumption which is necessary for capital accumulation.

Puritanism carried the ethos of the rational organization of capital and labour. They believed that "you may labour to be rich for God, though not for the flesh of sin."¹³ Wealth and its accumulation is bad ethically in the sense that it leads to idleness and sinful enjoyment of life. But as a performance of duty in a calling it is permissible. Because, "To wish to be poor was, it was often argued, the same as wishing to be unhealthy, it is objectionable as a glorification of works and derogatory to the glory of God.

Especially begging, on the part of one able to work, is not only the sin of slothfulness, but a violation of the duty of brotherly love according to the Apostle's own word."¹³

Calvin also opposed begging. The Dutch Synods campaigned against licences to beg. Laud's regime under Charles I had systematically developed the principle of public poor relief and provision of work for the unemployed, which was opposed by the Puritan as "giving alms is no charity."¹³ The Puritans believe that at whatever way God assigns one, he must do it, otherwise, he crosses one of the ends of his calling.

The ascetic importance of a calling provides an ethical justification of the modern specialized division of labour. To the Puritans, the division of labour and occupation in society is based on the principle of specialization, which leads to skilled labour necessary for the quantitative and qualitative improvement in production and thus results the common good which is identical with good of the greatest possible number. Only the specialized labours can do his work as a form of prayer, he knows neither time nor place. In a capitalist mode of production the division of labour is objectively pre-requisite. Even in a socialist economy indirectly stresses the need for a division of labour which out of sheer snobbishness the socialists call it an incentive, to catch up capitalists and to protect socialism.

According to Weber, the Puritan idea of the calling based on ascetic conduct directly influence the development of capitalism.

Tawney also clearly explained that the growth of Puritanism ended the influence of the religious teachers and church on economic matters by changing the traditional attitudes and social ethics of Christianity to changing economic

situation. But Tawney did not agree with Weber in some respect. According to Tawney, " ... Weber ignores, or at least touches too lightly on, intellectual movements, which were favourable to individualist attitude towards economic relations, but which had little to do with religion. The political thought of the Renaissance was one, as Brentano points out, Machievelli was at least as powerful a solvent of traditional ethical restraints as Calvin. The speculations of businessmen and economists on money, prices, and the foreign exchanges were a second. Both contributed to the temper of single-minded concentration on pecuniary gain, which Weber understands by the capitalist spirit."¹²

Tawney's analysis clearly revealed that as against the trend of medieval period that society was a spiritual organism, the sixteenth century witnessed the prolonged moral and intellectual conflict, of new conceptions of social expediency and of the new lines of economic energy. A revolt against ecclesiastical discipline. The new economic idea and the Renaissance led to the expansion of trade, increase in wealth and brought radical changes in economics and the religious doctrines. The sacramental integration of religious dogmas, moral values transcended down upon the populace by the pure theorists like Kant, Aristotle, Plato, Spinoza and Erasmus etc. and the inter continental rivalry for political supremacy, the old laws were abandoned to accomodate the glory of God as the glory of the nation, this exactly had happened since the fifteenth century. Therefore, inroads to capitalism were already strong to sweep away the weak and the immoral. Always the immorals are the weak and must not live for consumption alone. "In the sixteenth century, religious teachers of all shades of opinion still searched the Bible, the Fathers, and the Corpus Juris Council for light on practical questions of social morality, and, as far as the first generation of reformers was concerned, there was no intention

among either Lutherans or Calvinists or Anglicans, of relaxing the rules of good conscience, which were supposed to control economic transactions and social relations. If anything, indeed, their tendency was to interpret them with a more rigorous severity, as a protest against the moral laxity of the Renaissance, and, in particular, against the avarice which was thought to be peculiarly the sin of Rome."¹²

According to Tawney, the Puritan principles emphasized the importance of production over consumption, and thus helped capital accumulation.

The Puritan idea of the calling based on ascetic conduct directly influence the economic development. The worldly protestant asceticism acted powerfully against spontaneous enjoyment of life and restricted luxurious consumption and its struggle against the irrational use of wealth, thus naturally served to increase economic prosperity by making possible the productive investment of capital. In the words of Weber - "on the side of production of private wealth, asceticism condemned both dishonesty and impulsive avarice. What was condemned as covetousness, mammonism, etc. was the pursuit of riches for their own sake. For wealth in itself was a temptation. But here asceticism was the power which ever seeks the good but ever creates evil; what was evil in its sense was possession and its temptation. ..., ... the religious valuation of restless, continuous, systematic work in a worldly calling, as the highest means to asceticism, and at the same time the surest and most evident proof of rebirth and genuine faith, must have been the most powerful conceivable lever for the expansion of that attitude towards life which we have called the spirit of capitalism."¹³

The Protestants approved the rational and utilitarian uses of wealth

which served the glory of God but not one's enjoyment, because self-satisfied enjoyment of wealth is always a symptom of moral degradation. To Weber - "It is action that God is most served and honoured by ... the public welfare or the good of the money is to be valued above our own. Here is the connecting point for the transition from the will of God to the purely utilitarian view point of the later liberal theory."¹³

The Protestant Christianity believed that labour and industry is their duty towards God. So the faithful labour even at low wages should work hard, because " ... ascetic literature of almost all denominations is saturated with the idea that faithful labour, even at low wages, on the part of those whom life offers no other opportunities, is highly pleasing to God. ... the conception of this labour as a calling ... it legalized the exploitation of this specific willingness to work, in that it interpreted the employer's business activity as a calling."¹³

Due to the ascetic attitude, the greater the possession, the heavier the feeling of responsibility for holding them undiminished for the glory of God and hence increased them by restless effort. This is the true spirit of capitalism. According to Weber the religious asceticism encouraged to grow bourgeois economy. "A specifically bourgeois economic ethic had grown up. With the consciousness of standing in the fulness of God's grace and being visibly blessed by Him, the bourgeois businessman, as long as he remained within the bounds of formal correctness, as long as his moral conduct was spotless and the use to which he put his wealth was not objectionable, could follow his pecuniary interests as he would and feel that he was fulfilling a duty in doing so. The power of religious asceticism provided him in addition with sober,

conscientious, and unusually industrious workmen who clung to their work as to a life purpose willed by God."¹³

According to Karl Marx " ... asceticism be exalted to the basic moral principle of a new world religion which would inspire the oppressed masses with enthusiasm."³ This is important to point out that ascetism, like any other instinct of spiritual awakening has a negative influence upon those whose position in the society is below the average. To believe in the god's chosen man who is controlling the wealth and power is like believing in a barren cow for milk. There is no such thing as condemned by god or ordained by God. Nor there is favourite of God, in which case the less fortunate would resign to his lot. The accumulation of wealth begins with discipline - earn to save and live below the means.

The significance of Christian asceticism for the development of capitalism as described by Weber is as follows : "Christian asceticism, at first fleeing from the world into solitude, had already ruled the world which it had renounced from the monastery and through the Church. But it had, on the whole, left the naturally spontaneous character of daily life in the world untouched. Now it strode into market place of life; slammed the door of the monastery behind it, and undertook to penetrate just that daily routine of life with its methodicalness, to fashion it into a life in the world, but neither of nor for this world."¹³ (Probably a very pragmatic view which except Weber would find it difficult to subscribe.)

The religious hold of the masses in the West declined in the later part of the nineteenth century. With Protestant Reformation there was a great upsurge of religion of a more materialistic type. In Marx's view - "under

Protestanism, there is no supreme head of the church, the rule of religion is nothing but the religion of rule, the cult of the government's will."³ The Puritanism emphasized the importance of accumulation of wealth by avoiding all wasteful expenditures. Calvinism, one of the doctrines of Protestantism is the root cause of the capitalistic development, which regards work as a form of prayer. In Weber's view, Calvinism or Puritanism forced a man to live on minimum needed for subsistence and thereby re-invested their wealth and increased production. Karl Marx's opinion on Calvinistic doctrine is - " ... Calvin won the day. Calvin's creed was one fit for the boldest of the bourgeoisie of his time. His predestination doctrine was the religious expression of the fact that in the commercial world of competition success or failure does not depend upon a man's activity or cleverness, but upon circumstances uncontrollable by him. It is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of the mercy of unknown superior economic powers; and this was especially true at a period of economic revolution, when all old commercial routes and centres were replaced by new ones, when India and America were opened to the world, and when even the most sacred economic articles of faith - the value of gold and silver - began to totter and to breakdown. Calvin's church constitution was thoroughly democratic and republican."³

But according to Tawney, Weber oversimplified Calvinism. He criticised Weber's view in this way - "In the first place, he apparently ascribes to the English Puritans of the seventeenth century the conception of social ethics held by Calvin and his immediate followers. In the second place, he speaks as though all English Puritans in the seventeenth century held much the same view of social duties and expediency. Both suggestions are misleading. On the one hand, the Calvinists of the sixteenth century (including English Puritans)

were believers in a rigorous discipline, and the individualism ascribed not unjustly to the Puritans movement in its later phases would have horrified them. The really significant question is that of the causes of change from one stand point to the other, a question which Weber appears to ignore. On the other hand, there were within seventeenth century Puritanism a variety of elements, which held widely different views as to social policy. As Cromwell discovered, there was no formula which would gather Puritan aristocrats and levellers, landowners and diggers, merchants and artisans, buff-coat and his general, into the fold of a single social theory. The issue between divergent doctrines was fought out within the Puritan movement itself. Some won, some lost."¹²

But Tawney supported Weber's view on some respect. He said that Weber's essay was true and valuable as "his insistence that the commercial classes in seventeenth century England, were the standard-bearers of a particular conception of social expediency, which was markedly different from that of the more conservative elements in society."¹²

But there is no doubt that the belief of the Christianity helps in their economic prosperity. Because the spirit of Christianity has helped the Westerner in his search for knowing the God and the universe through sustained hard work and not by idleness. We would like to present here - "Also a symbol of the Mormons closes (after quotations) with the words "but a lazy or indolent man cannot be a Christian and be saved. He is destined to be struck down and cast from the hive."¹³

Now we come to the conclusion that economic ethics favourable to capitalist development is found only in Christianity.

As the ideology of Christianity is such that ... "And God hath commanded

you some way or other to labour for your daily bread and not to live as drones of the sweat of others only. God's commandment to Adam, 'In the sweat of thy brow', and Paul's declaration 'He who will not work shall not eat.'¹³

2.3 Islam and Capitalism

As an ideology of socio-economic construction Islam is impractical. A capitalistic development like Western-Europe did occur in the Muslim world or at least not before the nineteenth century, due to external influences and more particularly that the Muslims are based on fatalistic ideology. According to Maxime Rodinson "A very widespread popular view holds this to be so. Particularly accused of responsibility in this connection is the alleged 'listlessness' of Muslims, based on fatalism that their ideology is said to foster. This fatalistic indifference of theirs is contrasted with the spirit of initiative said to be characteristic of Europeans, whether this spirit be regarded as a hereditary feature of the latter or as something developed in them by Christianity in general or by some particular form of Christian ideology."⁸

It is a matter of great concern that business leaders and owners of capital as well as skilled labour and technically and commercially trained personnel of modern enterprise of any country of heterogeneous elements of different religions are mostly Christians. Max Weber has singled out the Protestant ethic as the most suitable religious doctrine to promote economic development.

According to Rodinson, Islam is in no way obstacle to economic development. In Koran although interest on land is prohibited, but it advocates

honest trade and commerce. Rodinson said that this existed in the time of Ottoman empire. For instance, he said, "Towards the middle of the seventeenth century, in the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul itself, the administrators of the property of the smaller mosques, who lacked the extensive estates in mortmain that were held by the big ones, obtained income for the upkeep of those places by lending out at interest the funds at their disposal (from gifts and legacies), at the rate of eighteen percent, as we learn from a European observer."⁸

It is quite clear that the Koran has nothing against private property, since it lays down rules of inheritance. Rodinson quoted from the Koran " ... that one must not forget one's portion of this world, it also says that it is proper to combine the practice of religion and material life, carrying on trade even during pilgrimages and goes so far as to mention commercial profit under the name of God's bounty."⁸

The Koran also states "Do not covet what Allah hath bestowed in bounty upon one more than another."

In another instance Rodinson also said that the interest was not actually prohibited if it is reasonable. We quote from his book the following lines " ... a question of getting the Muslim to prefer paying the zakat alms for the needy distributed through the welfare fund collected by the Prophet (and which he also used for other purposes), to making more profane, but more profitable use of their resources, by lending at interest."⁸

Though no special restrictions are laid down in Muslim religious law, yet the right of ownership is limited by certain considerations such as the right of everyone to life. "A man dying of hunger, is justified in taking the minimum food he needs to keep him alive, at the expense of the

'legitimate' owner."⁸

According to Rodinson as opposed to Weber, for the existence and development of merchant capital the following conditions are needed :

- i) Concentration of money and wealth, and
- ii) Capitalist mode of production (i.e. capitalist socio-economic formation).

Like Marx, Rodinson says 'capitalism is a mode of production in the strict sense of word, that is, an economic model in accordance with which production can be carried on in an 'enterprise' (in the widest sense of this term). An owner of means of production pays a wage to free workers in order that the latter may, using the aforesaid means of production produce commodities which the owner will sell for his own profit. He is an industrial capitalist."⁸

In capitalist mode of production, commodities are produced not to satisfy personal wants, but for trades and thus concentrates capital which leads to more and more production which have exchange value and thereby helps in the development of capitals. Capitalistic trade uses money to develop production for the market.

For Max Weber, capitalism, as an economic system, resting on the organization of legally free wage-earners, for the purpose of pecuniary profit, by the owner of capital or his agents, and setting its stamp on every aspect of society, is a modern phenomenon. Weber's capitalism is not identical with Rodinson's capitalist socio-economic formation.

In 'Islam and Capitalism', Rodinson tried his best to show whether or not capitalism existed in the Muslim world. For this purpose he eliminated

all these activities which did not offer such characteristics - barter and all those forms about which we knew from ethnological writings, exchanges of a ceremonial character, gifts which have prestige values, all non-monetary forms of lendings which do not lead to the concentration of money and wealth. The concentration of money and wealth is a necessary condition, though not sufficient, for development of socio-economic formation. Regarding the importance of capital ^{on} economic development, Rodinson remarked - "Thus, the digging sticks, the most primitive of agricultural implements, is a capital serving for production, just as a bow, a fishing net and even a mere pole are capitals serving for, food collection, for the acquisition of products that are natural in this sense. Actually, such 'capitals' exist in all societies even in the simplest. Their existence and even their importance are only distantly related to the development of the capitalist socio-economic formation."⁸

Tawney also made the same view as Rodinson's to mean capitalist development. Max Weber's opinion is also important. To him, "capitalism exist in China, India, Babylon, in the classical world and in the middle ages, but the peculiar characteristic, i.e. the ethic of the spirit of capitalism is not found in these countries."¹³ Weber used the concept of spirit of capitalism to mean the spirit of modern capitalism, which is found only in Europe.

Rodinson's view is also similar to Weber. He says " ... the ancient East, Greece, the Roman world, India, China, Japan also had a capitalistic sector of apparently the same sort as the Muslim world's, and also failed to follow Europe's path."⁸

The spirit of capitalism consists in a rational outlook and not in a traditional outlook. This is Weber's special thesis according to which the

origin of modern capitalism lies in the Protestant ethic. According to Rodinson, " ... it is in Europe and only in Europe that one finds a rational state based on a body of specialized officials and a highly rational system of law, Roman Law, which created 'formalistic legal thinking' (dus formal-Juristische Denken), in contrast to law founded on 'material' principles such as utility and equality. It is in Europe, he claims, that the adversaries of capitalist development were least in evidence, the tendency to think in terms of magic certain material interests, and an ideology of the traditionalist type, based on religion or morality."⁸

The Muslim tradition does not look down upon industry, trade and commerce even during the Prophet's life time. The prophet himself had said "the merchant who is sincere and trustworthy will (at the Judgement Day) be among the prophets, the just and the martyrs' or 'the trustworthy merchant will sit in the shade of God's throne at the Day of Judgement, or merchants are the messengers of this world and God's faithful trustees on Earth. According to holy tradition, trade is a superior way of earning one's livelihood. "If thou profit by doing what is permitted thy deed is a djihad (that is, is identified with holy war or any vigorous effort undertaken for God's cause) and, if thou usest it for thy family and kindred, this will be a Sadaqu (that is, a pious work of charity) and truly, a dirham (drachma, silver coin) lawfully gained from trade is worth more than ten dirhams gained in any other way."⁸ The Muslim faith has advocated honest trade and even they believe that one can die peacefully if he is engaged in business. For instance, "Umar is alleged to have said, "Death can come upon me nowhere more pleasantly than where I am engaged in business in the market,

buying and selling on behalf of my family."⁸

The Islamic faith does not give sanctity to beg alms since the prophet heaped the prays upon those who far from being parasite enrich themselves so as to be able to help the deprived.

Though Islamic faith advocates trade and commerce, yet certain commercial practices such as trade in goods regarded by religion as impure, fraudulent activities, goods that are considered as common to everyone, speculation in foodgrains, are prohibited by Islamic faith. But there is a vast difference in reality and theory.

The Koran and the Muslim religion are against private ownership of land. According to this faith no one can hold land perpetually more than he needed.

According to the Muslim tradition, every one should do his best at whatever station God assigns him. Everything comes from God and goes back to Him. Everyone should do his duty in a reasonable way for the benefit of all, because good things are entrusted to him by God. In this case, there is a similarity of Islamic faith with Christianity. Calvinists also believe that every one should do his duty at whatever station God assigns him in this life. But Calvinists doctrine of Christianity accepts it as a 'calling', they regard work as a form of prayer, which enabled them to work hard, soberly and reasonably for the glorification of God.

Rodinson quoted Torrey's summary of the practical theology of the Koran "The mutual relations between God and man are of a strictly commercial nature. Allah is the ideal merchant. He includes all the universe in

his reckoning. All is counted, everything measured. The books are the balance, are his institutions, and he has made himself the pattern of honest dealing. Life is a business for gain or loss."⁸ This is similar to the Christian ideology. Max Weber says, "Man is only a trustee of the goods which have come to him through God's grace. He must, like the servant in the parable, give an account of every penny entrusted to him, and it is at least hazardous to spend any of it for a purpose, which does not serve the glory of God but only one's enjoyment."¹³

The Muslim religious law prohibited excessive expenditure on land, building and luxuries more than one needed for subsistence. But in the Muslim world the same complaint is always heard that the available capital is absorbed by land, building and luxuries. But in Western Europe, particularly among the Protestants, they are not permitted to spend money on luxuries by their religious views, rather they reinvest available capital for more production. They account it as a calling. But for the Muslims in the religious laws stress is laid rather upon the good use to be made of one's possessions, the merit that lies in spending them intelligently and distributing them with generosity, an attitude more favourable to economic expansion than that of the Christian theologians. C.H. Becker regards it as an obstacle to economic prosperity. The "receiving of alms is a right for Muslims, as it is recognised by the religious laws (as begging is justified and it is encouraged by popular opinion, but from the economic point of view it is not reasonable, because it has the effect of keeping many people (able to work) away from productive activity. It has an adverse effect on economic development.

The Islamic religious laws only permitted honest trade as a normal

activity not speculative business. For example, we would like to quote the following lines from the Koran "O ye who have believed, do not consume your property among you in vanity, except there be trading by mutual consent on your part."⁸

In all religious ideology whether in Islam, Christianity, or Zoroastrianism, it is found that the good things of this world divert men's heart from them because they lead one to the danger of sin, since the rich and powerful are sinners, unjust and oppressive.

The Koran has nothing against private ownership of property since it lays down rules for inheritance. But it calls for a measured degree of generosity. The rules laid down in the Koran regarding inheritance, "assumed the stability of acquired wealth, recognised and regulated by God. In a sense, therefore, the 'fatwa' (legal opinion) given by the great Muslim University is quite correct in proclaiming with vigour, 'no communism in Islam.'⁸

But, Islam is the only religion after Christianity which sought to nationalize the land so that no owner can perpetually hold land more than he needed.

The usurious practices have been prohibited by all religions, but still the people practise it. Actually, the lending of money at interest can bring economic benefit for a society. In the European countries also, commerce was hampered by the prohibition of interest taking by the Church and the Jews suffered at the nobles and kings before the Reformation. Islamic faith also forbids the principle of usury. In the Koran, it is found 'Live not by usury doubled twice over ...'.⁸ But there are many instances in the history which show that usurious practices are practised by many Muslim countries.

One such example, is "in Basra there were many Muslims who practised the lending of money at interest."⁸

"Tunisia, in the 12th Century."⁸

Rodinson also showed that the trade of money changer and banker was flourishing. The bankers controlled at least a substantial proportion of commerce.

We would also like to quote from Rodinson's book "It is certain that usurious practices are to such an extent an integral part of Moroccan commercial custom that they have acquired the status of an institution that cannot be touched."⁸

According to Rodinson, 'a great Islamic scholar said that the prohibition of usury caused the trade in money to be monopolised in the Muslim world, first by the Christians, and then by the Jews."⁸

Many educated people also think that due to the prohibition of usury by the religious law, the Muslims have become poor and have seen their wealth pass into the hands of foreigners. As and when they need money, they borrow it from foreigners and paying them interest. But this is not true. In the opinion of Rodinson, "The Muslims abstained from it for a long time, but eventually they imitated the rest. For half-a-century now, lending at interest has been allowed in all the Muslim countries. In reality, it was practised earlier, under the cover of hila that was called 'legal' (Shariyya) and several legal authorities recognised it, for instance, for the investment of capital belonging to an orphan under age, or to a full-time student."⁸

The National Assembly of Pakistan aimed at abolishing all interest

rates on the ground that they violate the law of the Koran. But so far as commercial considerations are taken into account, it failed to abandon the practices of lending of money at interest. In actuality, religious and social changes are needed to promote economic development and economic changes are needed for social upliftment. But no nation can succeed in a world of tight financial rules adhering to principles which the Koranic authors did not envisage at that time.

In the pre-capitalist society - avarice, illegitimate trade and profits beyond one's wages of labour, possession of wealth or income beyond the minimum necessity were regarded as undesirable for a good society. The Islamic society is also not apart from it. The Koran has also forbidden a type of gain that is particularly excessive called 'riba' to maintain economic justice. But the Muslims no longer take account of religion in most of their actions. "It was undoubtedly practised very extensively in subsequent times, despite the Koran's prohibition of 'riba'. This is what has to be shown here, not for the benefit of orientalist historians, who are well-aware of it, but in opposition to certain popularizers, general economists and jurists who make play with a few impressive words of Arabic. They often try to show that the prohibition of riba presented any economic activity of the modern type from occurring among the Muslims."⁸

Socialistic ideas are not alien to the Muslim countries. The Muslim state has always feel obliged to finance welfare activities. The Koran does indeed call for a measured degree of generosity. Everyone ought to spend on the service of good or in charity, the income or wealth beyond the minimum needed for subsistence. The Muslim religious laws prohibits the ownerships

of means of production and sources of materials used for production. Like the Christianity, it is a religious duty of the Muslim to help the deprived. Tax paying is a religious duty for the Muslims. Taxes and gifts are collected by the head of the community to help the poor, to hospitality, to grants or to loans to the victims of certain calamities. The Muslims believe in the principle of equality before God. It was also the religious duty of the leaders of the Muslim community to conquer, to defend, to administer, and that of the members of the community to help them in these tasks. All these actions are rational actions because these can satisfy divine will. According to the Muslim religion, divine help is an essential factor in victory, but it is no way a substitute for human struggle with human means.

In the modern Muslim countries, the religious laws are not actually followed. Some Muslims scholars are of the opinion that this is due to the colonialism. But it is true that all social forms follow the same evolution. According to Rodinson, "it is not possible to prove, in the present state of knowledge, that if the colonial conquests had never occurred, the Muslim societies would have engendered a capitalist formation of the European-American type."⁸

As denounced by Marx, in the Muslim East when industrialization was being started, like the European countries labourers were exploited by the Capitalists, as labourers received low wages, living conditions were sordid and unhealthy, which were opposite to the humane principle of Christianity or Islam. The humane principle of Islam did not restrain the capitalist to follow this line of Europeans or the Muslim religious authorities did not utter the slightest protest against it. Now-a-days as oppose to humanistic principle,

child labour is a characteristic feature of capitalist enterprise in the Muslim countries.

The Islamic sects which held power for many years in several countries attacked acquisition of wealth very sharply. But once when it comes to power for example in Tunisia and Egypt, it did nothing.

From the 19th century onwards, the chief independent Muslim countries have taken over Western land law.

Islam, like communism is anti-capitalist and collectivist, but respect property just as capitalist does. According to Rodinson, "the special sense of the collective which is characteristic of Islam may today become a factor in economic progress."⁸

The thesis of Weber attacked the Islamic fatalism as the counter-productive to economic progress cannot be the only cause. There might be some other extraneous factors which has hindered the progress so far.

In the opinion of Rodinson, 'oriental characteristics of fatalism, indifference and inconsistency which are so often denounced not only by Europeans but also by Muslims.

But one can easily point out at the Koranic doctrine of predestination }
provided the unfavourable climate for the development of capitalism.

The Muslims were concerned to show that nothing in their religious tradition was opposed to the adoption of modern and progressive economic methods.

In Muslim socialism, the Prophets established the institution of social solidarity which is expressed in a variety of ways. The most important and

most indispensable ways for the good of society are according to Rodinson "moral solidarity, solidarity in knowledge, political solidarity, solidarity in defence of the community, solidarity in compensating the victims of a crime, solidarity in maintaining sound morality in the community, economic solidarity, ritual solidarity, cultural solidarity, alimentary solidarity, cultural solidarity, aimed at ensuring for every member of the community at least a decent level of subsistence."⁸

"The principle of social solidarity in Muslim socialism is one of the features that distinguishes this humanistic and moral socialism from every other kind of socialism known today. If it were applied in our society, the latter would be ideal and no other society would come anywhere near its lofty grandeur."⁸

Though one finds counter arguments that the religious faith of the Muslim world impeded economic prosperity, but the Islamic scriptures do not support this view.

According to another authority, "technical and economic progress heralds proletarianization, the degradation of the old values and the appearance of individual miseries ...". In other words, this progress seems to foster a frenzied egoism which, as regards relations between powers, leaves man indifferent to man. If Islam, in becoming industrialized, were to retain the substance of the Koran's precepts of fraternity and solidarity, if it were successful merely in keeping differences in standard of living within acceptable proportions, it would give the world a resounding lesson."⁸

Max Weber clearly pointed out that a certain calling is necessary

for economic development. It is also recognised by Roudinson - "it is certainly true that the development of capitalism was favoured by a coherent, authoritative and relatively fixed system of codified rules. It is possible that the fact of having the impressive corpus of Roman law at its disposal favoured the development of capitalism in Europe."⁸

But it is equally true that the fatalistic attitude of the Muslims 'take no thought of your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on ... has checked the spirit of initiative, paralysed material activity plunged the countries concerned into lethargy.' For capitalistic development the spirit of enterprise, the accumulation of capital are essential which are found in the West, but not in the Muslim world.

While Capitalism of various forms is met within all the periods of history, the provision of the everyday wants by capitalistic methods is characteristic of the accident alone and even here has been the inevitable method only since the middle of the 19th century.

2.4 Hinduism and Economic Growth

Hinduism is the title applied to that form of religion which prevails among the vast majority of the present population of India. According to the 1901 census, 70.3% out of the total population of India were Hindus. The purpose of this type of study is to discuss in a general way, the effect of Hinduism in economic prosperity in India. The materials for such a study are in many direction incomplete and fragmentary.

The economic life of the Indian people, in general is conditioned by geographical, physical, climatic factors on the one hand, and by

religious faiths and social institutions, age old customs on the other. India is a rich country with full of resources and wealth, yet famines and scarcities are not unusual in India.

It is alleged by some Western thinkers that Hindu religion bids a man turn to his back upon all material advantages as (i) this world is an illusion (Maya), (ii) the sense of the infinite (God does everything), (iii) attainment of Moksha is the only aim of life. As a result, Hindu religion and spirituality encourage a pessimistic attitude and a universal indifference to the material aspect of life.

The economic outlook, the social values and the attitudes of the people of India have been subject to centuries of religious influences. In India, religious influence is still strong on social and economic activities of the people. The learnings of Vedas, Purans, Epics - Mahabharata and Ramayana and the doctrines of Karma, Dharma and Samskara continue to influence the thoughts and emotions and outlook of the people and determine the economic activities.

The sources of Hindu religious beliefs and ideas are the Vedas, the Upanishads and the two epics - the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Hindu religion have a strong hold on the masses in India. Religious atmosphere can lead to progress or decay of a society. The religious atmosphere in India perpetuated a static economic order with little or no change in the belief or attitude of the people. But in the West, religion acted as a revolutionary force, changing the outlook of the people, which creates condition favourable for economic progress. In this connection we would like to quote Damel's remark ..." Max Weber postulates a linear relationship between religion,

rationality and economic development. Max Weber has singled out the protestant ethic as the most suitable religious doctrine to promote economic development. The implication of the protestant ethic as spelt out by Weber is as follows : In the first place the protestant sect puts premium on a very highly individualized religion so that one has to attain by one's effort. The kingdom of God could be realized on earth only through sustained hard work. The greatest premium is put on abstaining from any kind of wasteful expenditure of time, energy and money. All the three things mentioned have been utilized to further production. The greatest premium is put on saving and productive investment. Austerity is the key work in personal life."²

The principal doctrines of Hinduism are belief in transmigration of the soul (Sansara) and belief in retribution (Karma) by which the sins of a previous life are expiated in the present life, and Moksha or spiritual salvation. Though wealth and pleasure are considered important, yet in India, the guiding principle of social and religious institution is the eternal progress of the soul. But in the West, acquisition of wealth is given importance which they called 'calling'. In India little importance was given to everyday attitudes and practices.

Deep faith on religion dominated and still dominates the economic outlook of the people, in India. To strengthen the religious value, rituals, prayers and certain social codes were enforced and secured the sanction from the Vedic Authority. The aim of the religious side of the vedic rituals was to enlist the good will of divine powers by prayers and sacrifice. According to Mishra, the rituals encouraged effective demand but they adversely

affected the efficient allocation of resources.

Mishra's 'Hinduism and Economic Growth' clearly analysed the impact of Hinduism on economic development in India from early Vedic to Buddhism, Jainism and pre-Independence period. In his opinion, religion in the Vedic period discouraged investment and favoured child birth. Although the economy registered a higher level of growth and a greater diversification due to expansion in investment activities and greater adaptability of Aryans, the act of sacrificial ritual itself became direct means to achieve one's objective. The greater importance of ritual meant greater waste of resources and unequal distribution of wealth in favour of priestly class. This resulted in an adverse impact on economic application of knowledge, investment on economic application of knowledge, investment and also consumption. The social structure tended to become less flexible than before and began to satisfy itself rigidly restricting occupational mobility, which took the form of caste-system in the later ages.

The Atharva-Veda Samhita is a collection of versified prayers or hymns, some of which are magical and others are dealing with worldly life. During the Vedic period, importance was given to the renunciation of material enjoyment as opposed to acquisition of material wealth. But in western countries, due to ideology of Christianity, paramount importance was given to acquisition of material wealth. This, however, did not stop accumulation of wealth by the very few and the parasitic priest communities who praised the rich nobles to gain material benefits. This could be evidenced from the land grants, amassing gold and silver in the temples and totally neglecting the oppressed people. Hinduism is a religion which has to its credit

resourceful philosophy with empty meaning to the suffering lot.

"For the Hindus all true existence is non-material, unchangeable and eternal and, therefore, the material, changeable, temporal existence is false."⁷

The stress of an Indian was on Dharma and Moksa by which he attained self-realization. But an European laid emphasis on his rights and duties.

In the Upanisadic period also due to the importance of ascetic and other worldly character of Hinduism, material progress was neglected. The other worldly character of Hinduism adversely affected consumption and investment and encouraged high birth rate.

The law of Karma doctrine dominated and still dominate the minds of masses of Hindus and determines the social and economic values. The doctrine of Karma is nothing but the aggregate of man's actions in a former birth. A Hindu thinker would not hesitate to put forward the doctrine of Karma of Gita. The Gita mentioned that people who believe in action can achieve perfection. According to this doctrine, through Karma, one can reach the highest or doing one's own duty without any expectation of reward can satisfy God. "It says that a man can attain perfection if he does his duty as an act of worship of the Lord, who is the service of all creation in the creation."¹⁰

All worldly actions are considered to depend on the doctrine of Karma. In the Brahma Sutra Radhakrishnan said "Materialisation is the height of unintelligence. The Gita, when it calls upon to work for a world

community, calls us back to the Indwelling spirit which is in us as in others such a faith will help us to bring love where there is hatred, hope where there is despair, light where there is darkness, joy where there is sorrow.

We must give if we wish to receive. We shall be able to serve if we are ourselves served, integrated."⁷

According to Sen "the Hindu ethic as embodied in the Bhagavad Gita is that the principle of doing one's duty without expecting any benefit out of it is similar to the doctrine of 'Calling' in Calvinism which, Weber suggests is the main spirit of material progress in the West. But there is difference between the two. In Calvinism, the individual can select his calling while the ethic of the Bhagavad Gita emphasizes one's duty of remaining in one's station as determined by birth."²

In the Karmayoga of the Bhagavad Gita, it says "good and pure work as an offering of love. This will fulfill the Indian verse of wisdom. 'To help others is virtue, to hurt others is sin.' The man who follow this cannot earn his livelihood by working for the production and use of things that are useless, harmful or evil."⁴

The doctrine of Karma is so powerful that it determines the status of a Hindu, poverty or prosperity, happiness and miseries, deeply affected the attitude and outlook of the people and thereby affected the economic activity by discouraging capitalistic spirit, which is the characteristic feature in the West. The firm believe in the law of Karma of Gita leads a Hindu fatalistic, and therefore, they lack the essential conditions for economic development such as - hard and sustain work, the enterprising spirit, the will to take risk and accumulation of capital. Also through 'Karma' one

who accumulates wealth more than his share he is a thief, that is the true spirit of Gita. "The possession we have are a trust for others. The Gita gives the proper attitudes to wealth. Living beings have a right only up to what is necessary for satisfying their hunger; he who thinks of acquiring more is a thief and deserves punishments."⁷

The doctrine of Samskara leads a Hindu to believe in supernatural power. It is connected with the articles of food, with lucky and unlucky days, magic, etc. It not only influences the whole life of an individual but also the social institutions, belief, custom, etc.

The economic life of the Indians was influenced by these factors. But the true end of their life was Moksha or spiritual freedom. Max Weber was certain that the effects of Hinduism on South Asian Economic progress were essentially negative. The concept of Dharma, Karma and Moksha lowered the level of human aspiration and placed a premium on passive acceptance rather than on amelioration of the human situation whether by hard work or social reform. While accepting Weber's view the Hindu concept of Karma and Dharma did not lead us further than along the infinite road to self-realization. Does Karma of Gita allow us to accumulation of wealth a prospective investment capital? Karma done without attachment leads to Karma-mukti one of the two muktis - a gradual liberation of the soul. All are pre-destined to work and without Karma the world would cease to exist. It is as good as or as better as Calvinism - but when and where there was an agency which saw that it was operative. A man under the Calvinistic or Puritan influence was forced to live on bare subsistence and not with luxury less he faced expulsion from the Church.

The economic system of India is a product of the socio-religious

and cultural set up and practices. Although, wealth and pleasures are considered important by the Indians, but apparently they seek with divided earnestness of the spiritual freedom. The doctrine of Karma has affected productivity and investment, which is inimical to economic prosperity. The enormous expenditures on ceremonies and rituals absorb in significant amount of savings. Offerings of money and other valuable things to God to fulfill their desire is very common both among the illeterate and literate class and both in the past and the present time. These are unproductive expenditures. But the belief of the Protestant Christianity helps the westerners in his search for knowing the god and the universe through the spirit of Christianity. He worked hard, soberly and rationally in a 'calling' 'acceptable to God'. Weber has pointed out that only a rational outlook towards life gives the incentives to scientific thinking. Although, higher education thrived at some other stress of time elsewhere in the world including India, but 'a rational, systematic and specialized pursuit of science with trained and specialized personnel has only existed in the West in a sense of all approaching its present dominated place in our culture."²

Hinduism is more a way of life than a form of thought. All the paths of orthodox Hinduism lead away from natural science and the development of technology. Indian thought is indifferent to the actualities of the world. The religious doctrine of Hinduism is not favourable for economic development. "The individual's salvation can be attained only by conforming to the social order and not by deviating from it. Inevitably a static order comes into play. Then again due to the magical features of religion, religion did not really concern itself with the problem of ultimate meaning, but

religion almost became a substitute for science. Therefore, there was hardly any place for scientific thinking and activity in India. Naturally inventions both in thought and action were discouraged."² The orthodox Hindus did not mind denouncing those who aspired for welfare for all and prosperity for all. The philosopher like Charvaka had to turn his works based on materialistic outlook for life. Charvaka aimed to outdo with falsity and deception in religion, but he was not allowed to succeed. Charvaka believed that consciousness is the property of the soul and the consciousness dies with the death of man.

We should not be apologetic in accepting the word of Vivekananda who said "the Hindu man drinks religiously, sleeps religiously, marries religiously even robs religiously".

The other worldly elements of Hinduism emphasize that the human desires are the sources of human misery and unhappiness. Radhakrishnan said "the transitoriness of earthly possession is used to emphasise the imperative necessity of the practice of dharma. This is a well known verse which reads 'our bodies are not permanent, our prosperity is fleeting, death is always near to us. Therefore, one should take to dharma. The goal is a reorientation of human personality, where the self assumes control over cravings and desires. These latter are not to be destroyed but transformed. The kind of life one leads has an importance both for oneself and the world. This world is our home and our lives are dedicated to action.

We are not strangers in the world required to develop indifference to it. Each individual appears to be isolated but we soon realise that there is a living substance from which all emerge."⁷

He again said "we should not become victim of material interests and vulgar appetites."⁶

In the opinion of Schweitzer and Max Weber - Hinduism is other worldly and irrational in their inner-spirit and incapable of producing the positive attitude required for the development of industrial capitalism and social progress.

In Radhakrishnan's view 'We must work for better conditions for the material and spiritual development of human beings, for civilization is material and spiritual progress for both the individual and society.'⁷

The Hindu religion gives no importance to materialistic aspect of life rather it is concerned with the other-worldly views of life, and it influenced and still influences the Indian social system from its inception. As the Hindus believe in fatalistic asceticism, much importance is given for the other worldliness. But this other worldliness element of Hinduism impedes the economic development by recognising the renunciation of wealth. According to Radhakrishnan, the spirits of Hinduism had a tendency to spend their energies on soul development than on economic and social progress. In spite of other worldly elements of Hinduism, we also find this worldly element which sanctions materialistic values. The Hindu texts also largely shaped the social and economic ideas of the Hindus. The Mahabharata condemns poverty as a state of sinfulness and declares 'He who has no wealth has neither this world nor the next.' According to Kautily's Arthasastra, 'wealth and wealth alone is important in as much as charity and desire depend upon wealth for their realisation.'

In the Panchtantra the lack of money is described as the root cause

of all evil and vices. The Sukrantisara, an influential medieval text, observes that in this world wealth is the means of all pursuits and exhorts man to try to acquire wealth by legitimate ways, such as learning, service, agriculture, commerce, the practice of craft and even by mendicancy.

India is a land of paradoxes with this worldliness and other worldliness elements of Hinduism. P. Arora describes the characteristics of Hinduism as - "on the one hand Hindus are described as being highly emotional as compared to the more diffident and neutral Protestants, and on the other hand, the Hindus are incapable of rationally approaching economic enterprise. In order that these two generalizations are not construed to be contradictory, Weber insists that one is no middle way, only a sort of rotation between these two extremes. Now admittedly there is evidence of occasional periods during India's long history when the one or the other extreme prevailed. But I question that the episodes are so lengthy or so frequent that there is justification for characterising the essence of Hinduism by these two extremes."²

According to Milton Singer, "this worldly and other worldly elements of Hinduism are not necessarily incompatible and based on personal observations and interviews", he also points out that emphasis on meditation and Karma theory did not prevent a Hindu householder from discharging his worldly duties or in case of merchants, from the pursuit and accumulation of wealth. But we find counter-arguments that in practices, Indians give more importance in material values than on spiritual values. There exists an ethic in Indian life, which can sanction the materialistic values. In the opinion of Milton Singer and some other scholars, Hinduism contains

not only all the characteristics of Protestant ethic, which is according to the western thinker, conducive to economic growth, but also in the day to day activities of the Hindus are more materialistic as the westerners.

The present situation of Indian economy, particularly in the agrarian economy, the poverty of the farmers force them to become practical and avoid the other worldly element. We could like to add here from Loomis's book - "the frustration of the elite and the masses drive them to worship and patronize the Babas. It is a matter of day to day observation that the various babas such as Sai Baba, Meher Baba etc. have been regarded as avatars or incarnation of God who would help people to solve their day to day practical difficulties and problems. That this type of religion is more materialistic than spiritual value needs no further elaboration."²

But the doctrines of Karma, Dharma and Sanskara are still deeply rooted in the Indian minds and influence on the day to day activities of the people. That is why millions of Indian are still live below the poverty line.

Religion has not directly affected economic progress. But its effects on economic matters has been through various routes.

According to the western writers the other worldliness of Hindu religion stands in the way of the individual in attaining his full material individuality. In the opinion of Max Weber, Hindu traditionalism impinged upon a people's ability to accumulate wealth. ~~---~~

Hinduism is in contrast to the Weberian thesis of rational economic ethic, which is provided by Protestant ethic. Talcott parsons version

of Max Weber's Analysis of Hindu religion is - "In India there have been many paths of salvation, but they have only one goal. In so far as they lead to 'higher' religious aims then merely better prospects of rebirth, they are all directed to escape from involvement in this world altogether, they are all other worldly in this sense The importance of this world is so radically devalued that from this source there is no possible motive for emarking of the relation to it is possible than that of a passive acceptance of things as they are. There is, in the basic Indian position, no motive for the active worldly asceticism which is the basis of Protestant ethic."⁹

Mishra's view regarding other worldly characteristic of Hinduism is also very significant. In his opinion, this element of Hinduism pervades the economic development of India. He says - "As I have tried to show in my 'Hinduism and Economic Growth' ... asceticism is not wanting in Hinduism. What, however, does seem to be wanting in Hinduism is the concept of the 'calling'. I must, however, hasten to add that, in theory, the concept is there. 'Dharma' denotes excellence in this world as well as beatitude in the other. I would nevertheless got too blurred to register an impelling impact on the Hindu society. This together with the other worldly bias in Hinduism cuts at the root of the process of saving-investment income chain reaction which, I think, is the central point of Weber's analysis of Protestantism as a casual factor in economic life."²

We would also like to quote here from R.N. Saksena's book, a very suitable line which shows both the elements of Hinduism - this worldly and other worldly. "All kinds of meritorious acts flows from the possession of great wealth, as from wealth spring the religious acts, pleasures and

Heaven itself. Religious acts, pleasures, joy, courage, learning all proceed from wealth. The man who has no wealth, succeeds not in performing religious duties for, the latter springs from wealth, like rivers from mountains."⁹

In India, the economic life of the Hindus oppressed and restricted by the exuberance of religious life of which caste-system is only an off-shot.

In the early vedic period, there was no hereditary caste-system. It was a later development, which constituted the basis of economic and social action. The Bhagavad Gita makes the classification of the individuals into four classes. It advocates four Varnas and according to the different Gunas and Karma of each. Every one should always follow his own caste duties, even if his own proper duties are of an inferior one. A man can attain his highest only by performing the specific duties of his own caste.

The caste system, where the Brahman is the born master, prevented the mobility of occupation. Under the rigid caste system every household observed the caste taboos as a religious duty. Every household worshipped deities peculiar to that caste. In the Hindu society, occupational status is determined by the caste. The social and economic status of an individual was and is still attributed to his Karma. The doctrine of Dharma obligated the individual to fulfill his Karma. In order of economic as well as political action, the caste-system could not fail to retard the progress of Hindu civilization. In India the social set-up is influenced by rigid caste system and joint family system, another aspect of Hinduism. Thus there is little individual freedom and professional mobility. As a result, people have no incentive to work more, to earn more and save more. Caste system in India has made the economic functions of the people hereditary.

Under such rigid and conservative system, there is no place of efficiency and skilled labour, which kills initiative and enterprise. Damle points out that in India social relations are dictated by the caste-system. Through religion the caste-system is extolled. He says also that due to the structural relationship between the caste-system and the theory of Karma and rebirth, greatest premium is put on the maintenance of the inequitarian hierarchical pattern. This led to Max Weber to believe "once the cast-system in its rigid form took hold and become the integral part of the Indian social life and religious thought, the possibility of economic innovation leading towards the growth of science become more and more remote,"² which is refuted by Indian sociologist, describing "the importance of the secular dimensions of the caste-system"² (Sen) and the other who completely denied the Weber's view on caste to economic development - "caste in no way suppressed economic development" (Jha)² upholding the principle of division of people according to 'Gun' and 'Karma' yet very few could deny that hundreds of people die in every year in communal riots since independence.

Not only the westerners, but many of the Indian scholars also describe that caste-system hindered the economic development of India. "It is not unlikely that the failure of Indian to improve their material conditions lay in the social and political institutions of the country. The institution of caste tended to confine the loyalties of individuals to a group which become progressively small owing to the marked tendency to fission in the caste-system. The over-development of the concept of pollution split one sector of Hindu society from another, and the lower

castes, especially the untouchables, had everything to gain by going out of Hinduism into Islam and Christianity. Besides, caste rules prevented any development of a sense of adventure, crossing the seas meant becoming an out-caste."²

Swami Vivekananda considered caste-system as the negation of the principle of equity of man. It was his firm belief that a man's station in life was determined not by the mere accident of birth but by his efficiency. Actually, caste-system hindered changes of profession.

Though, caste system is the very soul of division of labour, yet this division of labour in Hinduism is different from that of Adam Smith, which is based on the principle of specialization and it can help in increasing the productivity of labour. Weber also favoured specialization of occupation. "Since it makes the development of skill possible, to a quantitative and qualitative improvement in production."³ But in India, it is a distinction of professions. According to James Mill, caste system sets up a direct obstacle to prosperity and progress and also it positively prevents competition.

In India no value is superior, in principle, to that which a Brahmin derives from his purity. In India religion is at the root of occupational distinctions. Division of labour is determined less by the natural aptitudes of labour than by the inequality of their social situation.

Myrdal, in 'Asian Drama', said "The caste in India is an obstacles to development. In a national setting of extreme poverty, it tends to make the existing inequalities particularly rigid and unyielding. Since large number of labourers in agriculture and other occupations

are despised as untouchables, the caste system fortifies the prevalent contempt and disgust for manual work. Since an orthodox Hindu regards not only those who perform this work but everyone outside his own caste as beyond the pale, it also warps and stultifies ordinary human feeling of brotherhood and compassion. The habits of thought molded by the caste-system and the confined and frustrated relations to which it gives rise afflict not only those well down in the social hierarchy but also those in its upper reaches, including business executives and administrative officials and university personnel."⁵

It is not only by direct action, the caste system impedes production, in a more general way it is by opposing these changes in social organizations which are necessary conditions of economic progress.

Nehru described the effects of caste-system as follows : "In later ages it was to grow into a very prison for the mind of our people not only for the lower castes, who suffered from it, but for the higher ones also. Throughout history it was a weakening factor, and one might perhaps say that along with the growth of rigidity in caste system, grow rigidity of mind and the creative energy of the race faded away."⁶

Not only in the past, but the caste system in India has impeded the social and economic changes of the country. Traditionalism and conservatism associated with caste still dominate the activities of the people. Though the constitution of India does not give any importance to caste, still it is very difficult to say that the system has lost its force. In fact, in present Indian social framework and political structure, the caste system continue to be of great importance. L.K. Sen analysed the immobility

of ideas in Indian caste-system as such - "The artisan caste, the potential innovations and mechanical engineers instead of exchanging knowledge of their age old skill with one another, guarded them as family secrets because this is how training in practical skills used to be transmitted. Even when they had new ideas, they became part of the family secrets. One primary requisite for invention is that knowledge of all existing techniques should be available to the inventor. This was not possible in the caste system, sometimes such knowledge was lost in the process of caste mobility."²

The joint family system, another aspect of Hinduism, is also an obstacle to economic prosperity. It breeds drones, promotes inertia, kills initiative and enterprise.

Along with caste-system and joint family system, early age at marriage, law of inheritance, purdah system, etc. stand as obstacles to economic development.

Hinduism is the most tyrannical and at the same time the most domestic of religion. It governs all the activities of daily life. Its influence on consumption habit is very striking. In Hindu tradition, one cannot eat indifferently with anyone and anything. Certain food articles are reserved for certain classes. Such religious belief affects production through consumption habits and limit the supply of food and creates periodical famines. Besides, Hindu belief favours early marriage thereby resulting in high birth rate and increases the population. In Myrdal's view "there are no explicit and clear cut strictures against birth control ..."⁵. They believe that only God could fulfill their desire for a small family. Tradi-

tional belief not only encourage early marriage but also encourage universality of marriage. According to Hindu belief marriage is a religious act.

The Hindu spend excessive expenditure on festivals, ceremonies, rituals, etc. In case of consumption and investment, Max Weber said, "the bhoga doctrine pertaining to the goods is clearly reminiscent of the consumption and materialistic orientation towards life and reality. Religious edicts put a premium on ostentatious living and worshipping. All these things worked against thrift and saving. Consumption was promoted at the cost of investment on productive activities."²

In all the periods, the condition was more or less the same. Economic progress was adversely affected by the attitudes, customs, religious dogmas and institutions. Hinduism had no change. The traditional outmoded outlook of the people did not allow them to adopt new techniques and scientific method.

There was a little change in the attitudes of the people and ideas, due to the impact of Christianity.

In the 19th Century, the attitude and outlook of the people were changed a little due to Christianity through British colonialism. As a result of adopting scientific method and technology, Indian economy developed. But a vast mass of Indians were still unresponsive to the change.

The doctrine of Karma, conservative law of inheritance, rigid caste system remained unaffected. The advent of British rule did not materially alter the ascriptive character of Hindu society.

Due to the influence of western thought the social reformers began to bring an overall change in Indian society, by changing the tradi-

tional outmoded outlook of the people. But the process of change initiated by social reformers during the 19th century did not contribute to much social and economic change. The caste system, more or less, remains the same, it continues to hinder occupational mobility and thereby discourages productive capacity of the people.

After Independence, attempts have been made to develop India's socio-economic condition. The Constitution of India introduced new social and institutional changes conducive to economic development. Even, legislative measures are undertaken. But, these measures have not succeeded to change the outlook and attitude of the people so deeply rooted in Indian minds.

Even today, religion continues to occupy a strong hold on all social and economic, political activities. Religious practices and modern socio-economic activities go together with scientific and technological knowledge. Blind religious practices have their impact on economic development.

Max Weber is right in his remark on Hinduism. To him, the other worldly asceticism in Hinduism and the divisive effects of caste which Indian solely present stands on the way of capitalistic development. In Hinduism, the ordinary activities are duties which must be carried out, but they are not the most important aspect of life. Because the world of phenomena is a world of illusion. Hinduism has restricted economic development through their emphasis on other worldly asceticism.

Not only on the socio-economic field but also in political matters, religion plays an important role. No one can afford to ignore the impor-

tance of the inter-relationship between religion and politics in India. For example, the partition of India is clearly indicative of the role played by religion in Indian politics. Gunnar Myrdal described the role of religion in India's Nationalist Movement - "Religious components of nationalism was usually much stronger. In India the early rise of aggressive nationalism in the last decades of the 19th and the first of the present century was dominated by orthodox Hinduism. Gandhi, as the recognized leader of the nationalist movement from the twenties, was much more modern in regard to social stratification and economic inequality. He stressed religion as the basis for political thought and action, but embraced in it all creeds. It is true that there remained a Hindu flavour in the nationalist movement he led, and this was probably not without responsibility for the failure of the Congress Party in the end to prevent the Muslims from breaking off thus necessitating partition."⁵

In different times, religion took different shapes in India's social, political and economic system. "The Indian National Movement itself, though secular in its objectives, also used communal consciousness. There was a distinct Hindu tinge in the leadership's work and thought ... Many leaders used Hindu symbols, idioms and myths in their political speeches and writings. India was often referred to as the Mother Goddess or compared to Durga, Kali or other Hindu goddesses. Gandhi too, appealed to people in the language of religiosity, for example, his interpretation of independence as Ram Rajya.

Religion is one of the most useful weapons in Indian political field. It is the most important factor in bringing about political changes.

Governments have been overthrown and elections won through the effectiveness of religious political parties, symbols and interest groups.

In India, the ways of life of the Hindus in different states and among different races are divergent. "The problem with Hinduism is that it has the great mass of authority which is divisive and divisible in itself like a split petal of a lotus whose beauty could again be revealed with delicate assemblage to the former shape."¹ This view is also subscribed by others and more clearly by Dr. Shiv Rao - 'one can see that Hinduism at first evolved in the vedic age, absorbed a number of belief, practices and cults of different races which in course of centuries came under its influence."² To which Mishra retorted - "It is almost naive to treat Hinduism as one entity."² Hinduism caters for violent as well as non-violent, the elements of violence during freedom movement and thereafter was subscribed by Kali worshipping. This has not changed Hinduism during slavery and Hinduism of today and the Hinduism of 500 years ago, is the same, the economic progress in India is the natural outcome of extraneous influences with the outside world and the negative factors like castism is revived with new political blessings to maintain status quo between community and community and between the ruling elites and the mass.'

According to some western thinkers, the doctrines of Hinduism - Karma, Dharma, Moksha, and spirituality foster a pessimistic attitude and a universal indifference to the material aspects of life. But if one looks to the past history of India, it appears to be untrue. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that majority of the Hindus believe in God and visit

temples and offer valuable things to God, yet there is a lot of corruption in public life. Generally, people are dishonest, speak lies and think in terms of personal gain ignoring the claims of community and the nation, though they are orthodox Hindu.

2. Conclusion

Economic development is a complex phenomenon. It is influenced by both social and economic factors or variables. Both these factors acted as constraints to social change and economic prosperity. It is only the characteristic features of under developed countries of the world, but in the western developed countries also, social factors played an important role in their development. Among all social rigidities the influence of religion and social attitude on economic growth received a great deal of attention in every country of this world.

Economic development is possible only when the social, political and economic institutions are favourable to it. Only those social activities which are economically productive will help economic prosperity of any country. Religious belief and ideas and practices influence economic development. Undoubtedly, it is accepted by all that there is an interdependence between social, political, cultural, psychological factors on manifold economic development. According to Tawney, "theology had a powerful impact on economies and brought forth the impact of religion on business vis-a-vis the impact of social and economic change on religion."¹²

Religious atmosphere can create condition necessary for economic

prosperity. 'For economic development, inhibitions and obstacles which stand on the way of development should be broken down and hence religious belief needs to be reformed.

Till the 16th Century, the economic society of the West was dominated by the church and religion. But afterwards, the economic development in the west was helped by the changes in the attitude and outlook of the people. In Max Weber's opinion, the economic ethics favourable to capitalist development was found only in Protestant Christianity. According to Weber, Protestantism, especially in its Puritan form has had a very great influence in forming the spirit of capitalism. The intrinsic character of any religious belief influences on economic development. A vigorous discipline is needed for capitalistic development. The spirit of capitalism consists in a rational outlook and not in a traditional outlook. Due to the intrinsic character of religious belief and the traditionalistic outlook, the Catholics are not economically developed as that of the Protestants. The other worldly character of Catholicism forced them to become indifference toward the good things of this world. According to Weber, the protestant doctrine of the calling and the 'rationalization' are the two factors for economic development. The doctrine of 'calling' in Calvinism - doing one's duty without expecting any benefit, but for the glory of God and 'rationalization' - restricts all luxurious consumption and irrational use of wealth, are the main spirit of material progress in the West. The impact of Protestant religion on economic life leads to social and institutional changes, which resulted rapid economic development.

The economic differentiation of various countries is the result of their peculiar religious belief and practices. Hinduism have a stronghold on the masses in India. The religious belief of India perpetuated a static economic order. Even today, the doctrines of Karma, Dharma and Moksha with others rituals and taboos are practised by the Hindus. The enormous expenditure on unproductive activities as ceremonies, festivals, pilgrimages etc. reduces savings and thereby affected productive investment.

Some times one may wonder "Do the Indians have religion which listen to the souls that are crushed by communal hatred and greed for wealth. The Hindus have shown more concern to propitiate concrete and metal gods and would not even hesitate to destroy any living soul that comes on their way. Hindu soul was not liberated in the Vedic days and no hope for liberation in the future either."¹

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CHAPTER III
SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE OF ASSAM

3.1 Introduction - Pre-Historic Account of Assam

Assam is a unique state for several reasons from the ancient times. It is the world's smallest region, where largest number of ethnic identities are living. Human activities are determined by socio-religious and cultural structure of the people. Assam is not an exception. Socio-religious environment and structure influence the economic activities and the growth of economic organization.

Here we see population of heterogenous elements of different races, castes who speak varied languages and dialects. Many of these people still survive and will survive with their own life style and culture.

The pre-historic account of Assam help us to know that the name Assam is actually a recent origin. "In the Hindu epics and in Pauranik and Tantrik literature there are numerous references to ancient Assam, which is known as Pragjyotisha in the Mahabharat and as Kamrupa in Purans and Tantras."⁴ In the opinion of K.L. Barua "The country known as Pragjyotisha, in the most ancient times and as Kamrupa in medieval times, has been mentioned both in the Ramayana and Mahabharata."²

It is very difficult to find a complete picture of the Assamese society in the ancient times. This is because of the fact that the different heterogenous racial elements could not combine themselves to be united.

The pre-history of Assam is in some measure different from other states of India with varied socio-religious systems. Assamese culture

is the sum total of the primitive and the advanced, contributed both by Aryan and non-Aryan elements. The pre-historic account of Assam associated with the rulers of Pragjyotisha and Kamrupa. The early history of Assam "began with the Kirata chiefs of Mongolian affinity, having probably an admixture of Alpine blood; because the foundation of the Kirata rule took place at a time when the Alpines may have already settled in Eastern India."³

"The earliest king of Assam belonged to non-aryan tribes"¹. the earliest king of Pragjyotish or Kamrupa was named Mohirang-Danab and the inhabitants of the country were known as Kiratas and Mlechhas. He had his capital at Mairanka, but how and when the kingdom was established are not known. He was succeeded by Hatakasura, Sambasur, Ratnasura and Ghatakasur. Ghatakasura was overthrown by Naraka from Videha, who founded a new dynasty in Pragjyotisha. "He made Pragjyotisha (the modern Gauhati) his capital and settled numerous Brahmans and Kamakhya symbolizing the Zoni Peeth described in Shiva Puran. His kingdom extended from the Karatoya on the West, to the Dikrong on the east."⁴ At first, he was very pious and ruled his country righteously. He became friendly with Bana, king of Sonitpur and became irreligious and he died at the hands of Krisna. Though himself a non-Aryan king, he was the first chief known to have introduced Aryan culture and civilization in ancient Assam.

After Narakasur, his eldest son Bhagadatta became the king. He was very powerful. He was succeeded by his son Bajradatta. Naraka's descendants continued to rule for nineteen generations. After Bajradatta,

Pragjyotisha declined. During this period, the Bodos or the people of the Mongolian race might have established their supremacy over Kamrupa.

In the Bhagavat, it is narrated that there was a king named Bhishmak, who ruled in Viderbha. He had five sons and a daughter named Rukmini. Krishna, having heard of her beauty, was anxious to marry her, but her father had arranged to give her to another prince named Sisupal. Rukmini secretly sent the news to Krishna and Krishna carried her off.

There is another story in the Bhagavat, Ban, the king of Sonitpur had many sons and a daughter named Usha. She was beautiful and fell in love with Anirudha, grandson of Krishna and married her according to the Gandharva way.

"According to the 'Jogini Tantra', a sudra named Debeswar was ruling in Kamrup at the commencement of the Sak era."⁴

Gait also writes that "a Kshatriya named Dharma Pal, came from the West and founded a kingdom and made his capital west of Gauhati and settled a number of Brahmans and other high caste Hindus from Upper India. He was succeeded by Padma Narayan, Chandra Narayan and others ending with Ram Chandra, whose capital was at Ratnapur, presently Ratanpur in Majuli. Ram Chandra's son Arimatta founded his kingdom in lower Assam."⁴

The real political history of ancient Assam begins with the foundation of the Varman line of kings.³ The Nidhanpur Grant contains the names of thirteen kings of Varman dynasty. Pusyavarman was the first king of this line. He was a contemporary of Samudra Gupta. In K.L.

Barua's opinion, the first epigraphic record which mentions Kamrupa, is the famous Allahabad inscription of Samudra Gupta which was once regarded as posthumous but which historians now believe to have been engraved during the life time of the famous emperor. In this inscription Kamrupa is mentioned as a frontier kingdom along with Samatata, Devaka, Nepal and Kartripura, the kings of which fully gratified the imperious commands of Samudra Gupta "by giving all kings taxes and obeying his orders and coming to perform obeisance."²

Pushyavarman was succeeded by his son Samudra Varman, Ganapati Varman and Mahendra Varman. "The Kamrupa kingdom began to flourish and Mahendra Varman became a paramount sovereign in Eastern India"¹ whose reign may be placed between 450 A.D. to 485 A.D. He was the first Kamrupa king to perform the Asvamedha Sacrifices, indicating his independent status and political influence over his neighbours.³

Mahendra Varman was followed by his son Naryana Varman, who ruled between 485-510 A.D. who was followed by Mahabhuta Varman and after him Chandramukh Varman and then Sthita Varman, Susthita Varman reigned in Kamrupa.

Bhaskar Varman, the greatest ruler of this dynasty and of medieval India, succeeded the throne of Kamrupa in 594 A.D. With the accession of Bhaskar Varman, says Choudhury, Kamrup entered into a new chapter of her history.

Bhaskar Varman was the contemporary of Harsha Vardhana, otherwise known as Siladitya, hereditary king of Thaneshvar, who ruled from 606 to 648 A.D. and established himself as Lord Paramount of the whole

of the Ganges Valley. It is mentioned in the report of the Chinese Pilgrim Yuan Chwang and also in Ban's Harsha Charita that Bhaskar Varman of Kamrupa sent an ambassador with valuable presents to secure Harsha's friendship. In the opinion of B.K. Barua, unfortunately there is no records to show that either Bhaskar Varman or Harsha succeeded in conquering the Gauda Kingdom during the life time of Sasanka¹. K.L. Barua, however, following N.N. Vasu, believes that after this alliance Sasanka was overthrown and obliged to retire to the hilly country in the South, and consequently Gauda with Karnasu Varna came to the possession of Bhaskar Varman ...'. From the Nidhanpur Grant as well as from the account of the Chinese Pilgrim, it is evident that Bhaskar Varman was in possession of Karnasuvana and Gauda.¹ We would also like to quote the remark of R.C. Mazumdar about Bhaskar Varman 'thus increased the power and prestige of the kingdom of Kamrupa to an extent never dreamt of before.'¹

During Bhaskar Varman's reign the Chinese Pilgrim Yuan Chwang visited Kamrup. From his account it is known that Kamrup included the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley, the whole of the Surma Valley and South-East Bengal. It extended in the south to the Bay of Bengal, and in the east to Burma and the Chinese empire. There was no Buddhist influence in Kamrup. The people were perhaps, mostly Hindus. "Bhaskar Varman lived until at least 650 A.D."⁴

After the death of Bhaskar Varman, the Varman dynasty came to an end. The kingdom was taken possession of by Sala Stambha, a great chief of the Mlechhas, he was followed by Vighraha Stambha, Palaka Stambha, Vijara Stambha and others of the same race. "The Bargaon

Copper Plate inscription of Ratnapala Varman deciphered by Dr. Hoernle mentions that after this for several generations kings of Naraka's dynasty had ruled over the country, a great chief of the Mlechhas owing to a turn of adverse fate, took possession of the kingdom. This was Salastambha."²

In the opinion of K.L. Barua, the word Mlechhas means the non-Hindu Mongoloid people of the Kingdom. A tribe of these people is still known by the name 'Mech', which is the abridged form of Mlechha.² After Bhaskarvarman, Salastambha dethroned the immediate succession of Bhaskar Varman and became the king of Kamrupa (655-675 A.D.) who was followed by Vighraha Stambha, Palaka Stambha, Vijaya Stambha and others of the same race ending with Sri Harsha (750 A.D.)⁴ Gait in "A History of Assam" says, from the names of these Mlechha kings it may be concluded that they, like so many of their successors, were converted to Hinduism as soon as they became worthy of the notice of the local Brahman priests.⁴

In the "Early History of Kamrupa", Barua states 'the empire of Sri Harsha Varman Deva therefore comprised all the three present provinces of Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa with the addition, perhaps of the eastern portion of the United Provinces and the northern portion of the Madras Presidency'.²

It is found in Gait's History of Assam that the race of Salastambha ended with Harsha Deva.⁴ But, Barua refuted it, in his opinion, Harsh Varman Deva was succeeded by his son Bala Varman II. With Harsha Deva's death the empire which Bhaskar Varman acquired and which he largely extended also fell to pieces. Practically the whole of Gauda passed out of the hands of the Kamrupa kings."²

After Bala Varman II came Pralambha the son of Arathi who seems to have been the contemporary of the first Pala ruler Gopala. Pralambha was followed by his son Harjaka Varman who ruled during the period 820-835 A.D. He was succeeded by his son Vanamala who was a conqueror and his kingdom was extended as far as the line of forest near the sea shore. Vanamala was followed by his son Jaymala and he was followed by Bala Varman III (875-890 A.D.).

It is known from the early history of Kamrupa that "after Bala Varman III there is no gap covering nearly 100 years - the largest gap in the chronicle of the Kamrupa kings from the fourth down to the twelfth century. In between 970-985 A.D., Tyaga Sinha become the king, he was the 21st king of Salastambha's line."²

After that, a new dynasty, Pal Dynasty (985 A.D.) appeared. Tyaga Singha died childless, the people of Kamrupa elected Brahmapala as their ruler. In his reign Kamrupa was attacked by Jata Varman of the Varman line. Jata Varman invaded Kamrupa and defeated the king, but could not annex the kingdom.² After this defeat Brahmapala abdicated in favour of his son Ratnapala, who had a long reign. It is found in the Indrapala inscription that his son Purandar Pala died during the lifetime of Ratnapala, who was succeeded by his grandson Indrapala. He was succeeded by his son Gopala who ascended the throne probably about the middle of the 11th Century. After him, the country was reigned by Harshapala and then Dharmapala. In Barua's view, "the Kamrupa kings from Indrapala to Dharmapala were followers of the Tantrik tenet and about that period Kamakshaya had become an important seat of Tantrik Buddhism."² Dharmapala was succeeded by Joypala, who was overthrown

by the Pala ruler of Bengal and a vassal named Tingyadeva was set up on the throne. After him Vaidyadeva became the king. He ruled till 1150 A.D. He was followed by two other kings, after who came Prithu, who was probably the king ruling when Mahammad-i-Bukhti-yar invaded Kamrupa in 1206 A.D.² In 1227 A.D. Ghiyas-ud-din, a governor of Bengal conquered the Brahmaṇḍra valley as far as Sadiya, but he was overthrown by Nasir-ud-din, the son of Iltutmish in 1228 A.D. The last king of the dynasty of Prithu was Sandhya. During his reign, Malik Yuzbeg invaded Kamrupa and was defeated by Sandhya. The Muslim army suffered heavy losses. Since then Kamrupa enjoyed freedom from serious foreigner aggression for a period of more than 200 years until the end of the 15th century. Sandhya removed the capital to Kamatapur.

During this long period of peace and freedom from external attack many changes took place in the kingdom of Kamrupa. According to Gait, 'a line of Chutiya kings ruled the country east of the Subansiri and the Disang'.⁴ To K.L. Barua, "during this period the Kacharis became powerful and advanced towards the west upto the boundary of the present district of Kamrupa."² As Gait pointed out, west of the Kacharis on the south bank, and of the Chutiya on the north, were a number of petty chiefs called Bhuya. These chiefs are well remembered in Assam legends as the Bar Bhuiyas.⁴

The Chutia kingdom was founded towards the end of the 13th century when the Kamrupa kings lost their hold over the eastern part of the kingdom and the capital was transferred to Kamatapur. Prior to this kingdom, a Hindu dynasty ruled in Sadiya or Vidarbha. "The said dynasty appears to have collapsed by a process of internal decay"⁴.

The founder of the Chutiya Kingdom was Bir Pal.

During the reign of Indranarayan, son of Durlabhnarayan, king of Kamatapur, the petty Bhuyan chiefs of eastern Kamrupa again raised their heads and became independent. They ruled the country, but not for a long time. A new dynasty - Koch Kingdom appeared in the scene. Bisu, the son of Hoia Mandal attacked the Bhuyan chiefs and became king and assumed the name of Viswa Singha in 1515 A.D. He removed his capital to Koch-Bihar. He became a great patron of Hinduism. He revived the worship of Kamakhya and imported numerous Brahmans from the Ganges Valley. After his death in 1540 A.D. his eldest son Narnaryan became the king and appointed his brother Chilarai as his prime minister and commander-in-chief. During his reign in 1546 A.D. the Koch army invaded the Ahom territories. In 1562, Naranaryan made another attempt to overcome the Ahoms. He also sent an expedition against the Kacharis on the south who were easily overcome.

During Narnaryan's reign the Koch kingdom reached its zenith. His kingdom included practically the whole of the old kingdom of Kamrupa of the kings of Brahmapal's dynasty with the exception of the eastern portion known as Saumara which formed the Ahom kingdom. Towards the west the kingdom appears to have extended beyond the Karatoya, for according to Abul Fazl, the author of the Akbarnamah, the western boundary of the Koch kingdom was Tirhut. On the South-West the kingdom included the Rangpur district and part of Mymensingh to the east of the river Brahmaputra.²

After the death of Naranarayan the Koch kingdom fell to pieces. The Mughals and the Ahoms tried to take possession of the kingdom.

After his death, his son Laksmi Narayan became the king of the western portion in the capital at Koch Bihar. The eastern part of the Koch kingdom was given to Raghu Dev. During this time, the Ahoms occupied the eastern portion and the western portion came under the Mughals.

In the year 1228 A.D., the Ahoms, a new power came into political limelight in the eastern reign of Assam and ruled over this land for a period of about six hundred years upto the Christian era 1826 A.D. During their reign there existed a cordial relationship between the people of the plains and of the hills.

The Ahoms entered Assam under the leadership of Sukapha in 1228 A.D. and founded a small kingdom in the eastern region of Assam with his headquarters at Saraideo by defeating the Nagas, the Barahis and the Morans. After which, he wisely adopted conciliatory measures, and, by treating them as equals and encouraging inter-marriage, he welded them all into one nation.⁴ After his death in 1263 A.D. his son Suteupha ruled the country and died in 1281 A.D.

Sukapha appointed to great officers of the State, known as Bargohain and Bura Gohain. During his reign the Ahom kingdom extended upto the river Dikhau. The Ahoms in order to extend their kingdom engaged in wars with the Naras.

From time to time the Ahoms had to engage themselves in constant conflict with the Kacharis, the Nagas, the Chutias and the Buyans and extended their kingdom.

According to the Ahom Buranji in the early part of the thirteenth century, Chutias ruled the country east of the Subansiri and the Disang.

During the Chutia reign, there were frequent wars between them and the Ahoms, who finally overthrew the Chutias.

Since the transfer of the capital to Kamatapur the actual government of eastern Kamrupa, as far as the Subansiri in the north and the Kopili in the south was in the hands of petty Bhuyan Chiefs."² Gait Writes, each was independent of the others within his own domain, but they seem to have been in the habit of joining their forces whenever they were threatened by a common enemy.⁴ Durlabhnarayan, a powerful and resourceful ruler, was the sovereign over all the Bhuyans of the eastern part of Kamrupa. After him Arimatta had to fight against several Bhuyan chiefs. In the opinion of Gait, 'the only Kamata dynasty of which we have any connected account is that of the Khyan or Khen kings, whose last representative, Nilambar, was overthrown by Husian Shah in 1498 A.D.

In 1497, Suhungmug became the king. During his time 1497-1537 A.D., he was able to make friendly relationship with the Kacharis, the Chutias and the Nagas, the Koch and Manipur kings. He was succeeded in extending the Ahom dominions in all directions from Sadiya in the east upto the river Karatoya in the west. As stated by Gait, three Muhammadan invasions were successfully repulsed. Subsequently, the koch king Biswa Singha was forced to remain as a vassal under the Ahom kings.

After Suhungmug, Suklenmug succeeded the throne and made his capital at Garhgoan, he was known as Gargaya Raja.

The Mughals invaded Assam as many as seventeen times, but they succeeded only thrice.

In 1648 A.D. Jayadhja Singh became the king. During his time the Ahom established friendly relationship with the Jaintia kings.

The Ahom kingdom extended upto the river Sonkos the western boundary of Goalpara. During this time, the Moghals under the command of Mirjuma led an expedition to Assam and proceeded upto Gargaon. The king was compelled to pay tribute to the Mughal emperor of Delhi. But during the reign of Chakradharaja Singha (1663-1669 A.D.) and Udayaditya (1669-1673 A.D.), the Mohammedans were driven out of Kamrupa and the boundary of the Ahom Kingdom was extended upto Hadira, opposite to Goalpara.

But during the reign of Sudaipha, who ruled the country under the absolute domination of the Burha Gohain, removed or disgraced several high officials. As a consequence, the Bar Phukan entered into treasonable correspondence with the Nawab of Bengal and agreed to deliver Gauhati to the Moguls. The Bar Phukan then proceeded to Kajiabor. In 1681 A.D. Gradadhar Singha became the king. After ascending the throne he marched against the Moguls with an army and drove them beyond the river Manaha, this was the last Muhammadan war. Henceforth the Manaha accepted by both sides the boundary and continued to exist till 1826 A.D. when the rule of the country passed to the British ruler.

After Gadadhar Singha, Rudra Singha became the king. He was the last and the most powerful king. During his reign, the country developed both culturally and politically.

After the death of Rudra Singha in 1714 A.D., the Ahom power began to decline as a result of the civil war - the Mowamaria Revolt.

During the reign of Lakshmi Singha (1769-1780 A.D.) the Moamaria Gossain, who was insulted by the queen Phuleswai (she was an orthodox Sakta) determined to take revenge against the king. The flame of the Moamaria rebellion broke out in 1769 A.D. During the reign of Gaurinath Singha Moamaria Bidroh reached its highest point.

In 1810 A.D. Chandrakanta Singha became the king. At the time of his accession, a proposal was made by the Bar Phukan to make the country tributary to the British Government, but the Bura Gohain rejected it. At Bar Phukan's death, one Badanchandra was chosen as his successor. The reign of king Chandra Kanta Singha was marked by a fatal feud between the Bar Phukan of Gauhati, Badanchandra and the Prime Minister Purnananada Buragohain'.⁸ Badanchandra went to Burma and misrepresented to the Burmese King that the Buragohain had usurped the king's authority. He sought the help of the Burmese king to kill the Buragohain. The Burmese king agreed and a battle was fought in which the Burmese were victorious. Badanchandra Bar Phukan sought Burmese help to establish his personal ascendancy in the Ahom kingdom. Badan Chandra's betrayal ruined the Ahom State. The Burmese invaded Assam three times.

Chandra Kanta Singh was followed by Purandar singha (1818-1819 A.D.). With him, another period of puppet kings began and it ended with the fall of the Ahom kingdom in the wake of the Burmese and British invasions, thus began the modern era.

By defeating the Ahom kings, the Burmese occupied the Ahom kingdom. But soon they came into open clash with the British power. For a long time, the Burmese aggressiveness and arrogance had offended the British Government of Calcutta. When they attacked the territories

under British protection, the British intervened. In several engagements, they were fought and the Burmese were defeated. The Anglo-Burmese war which thus began ended in the expulsion of the Burmese from Assam. The British Army advanced from Goalpara towards Gauhati. In 1824 A.D., the British began advancing towards Upper Assam. The Burmese were then forced to hand over the administration of Assam to the hands of the British by the treaty of Yandabo on the 24th February, 1826. The Burmese rule came to an end with the treaty of Yandabo which at the same time laid down the foundation of British rule in Assam.

After the treaty of Yandabo, the East India Company assumed in their hands the Government of the country. But they did not take over the direct administration of the whole country at once. The British set up Purandar Singha as a nominal king. Puranda Singha was dethroned in 1838, because of his failure to pay the huge amount of his tribute to the British government and his kingdom of Upper Assam was annexed.

After the annexation of the Brahmaputra valley and the Surma valley, the British ruler extended their rule to the tribal areas of the Naga, Mizo and Garo hills. Between 1864 and 1899 A.D. the whole of Assam, both hills and plains, came under direct British administration.

Assam lost her independence in 1826 A.D. to the British, after the treaty of Yandaboo. But the flame of freedom was not dead in her. During the first thirty years (1826-1857 A.D.) of the British rule, the struggle was continued by the people. The general masses were not yet awakened to the real character of the new rulers. But in 1857, a great rebellion broke out all over the country, to recover independence by driving out the British. This was the first war of Independence or the famous

Sepoy Mutiny. The hanging of Maniram Dewan and Pyali Barua were carried out. After the suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny, Queen Victoria took over the Government of India from the East India company by a proclamation in 1858 A.D.

The British government, adopted the Ahom frontier policy and extended their administration to the whole of the country. During the early part of their rule, Assam was administered under the Government of Bengal by a commissioner till 1874 A.D. The first Commissioner of Assam was David Scott.

For more than ten years after the annexation, Assamese was the language of the courts in the Brahmaputra valley proper, but it was then superseded by Bengali."⁴

There was a radical change in all sphere - in the administration, in the economic condition, in the educational system, in the judicial system etc. of Assam during the British rule. For more than a century, Assam was under the British administration. The British destroyed our independence, but at the same time the British rule benefited the country with secular ideals and transient peace.

Since the Sepoy Mutiny, Assam kept pace with the national awakening in the country. The nationalist stir of the Assamese people was the effect of western system of education, improvement in communication and the feeling of unity and consciousness. Assam attained independence on 15th August, 1947, along the rest of India, after a long struggle.

3.2 Religious Transition in Assam from the Early Period to Pre-Independence

Assamese society of the ancient time constituted of different heterogenous racial elements. They could not combine themselves into unity, although not incohesive. Different racial elements had their own faith and the contribution made by different races constituted the religious fabric of ancient Assam. According to Choudhury, 'the pre-history of Assam is in some measure different from other states of India with varied socio-religious systems. Assamese culture are the sum total of the primitive and the advanced, contributed both by Aryan and non-Aryan elements. The pre-historic account of Assam associated with the rulers of Pagjyotisha and Kamrupa. The political history of Assam began with the Kirata chiefs of Mongolian affinity, having probably an admixture of Alpine blood; because the foundation of the Kirata rule took place at a time when the Alpines may have already settled in Eastern India."³ It is believed that the Austrics, Alpines and different branches of Tibeto Burman, the non-vedic Aryans, first entered and lived in ancient Assam and they laid the foundation of various cults in Assam.

Assam is mostly known as a land of Kamakhya or the home of Tantrism. In the ancient time, the worship of stones, trees etc. were very common which is known as fetishism. This fetish worship supplied materials for the foundation of Tantrism in Assam, with its centre at Kamakhya, the temple of the Yoni of goddess developed by the Austric and other elements. The Kalika Purana proved the worship of Linga and Yoni. From the Yogini Tantra, it is known that there are a million lingas in Kamrupa. It is clear from these evidences that the people of Kamrupa

had deep faith on Saivism and Saktism from the earliest period.

Animism, the root of the various cults in Assam is originated from the non-Aryans. The worship of nature by the Hindus is based on the same belief. We would like to quote here the remark of A. Lang, 'among primitive and advanced minds, there co-exist the mythical and the religious elements in belief. The rational factor is visible in religion, the irrational is prominent in myth.'³

Head hunting and human sacrifice, based on animistic belief are still found among many tribes of Assam. There are many evidences in the Yogini Tantra, and the Kalika Purana about human sacrifice in the temple of Kamakhya and the copper temple of Sadiya 'It was definitely contributed by the Austric and Tibeto-Burmese and formed the basis of Tantrikism in Assam, which passed on into the Hindu and later Buddhist faiths. It is in the name of religion that the worst horrors of the world were and are being committed by the people, called primitives, and the so called civilized Hindus have inherited those rites with little or no differences at all.'³ As faith on religion is transmitted to man from generation to generation through tradition, as a part of his culture. Thus religious belief needs to be reformed in order to break down inhibitions and obstacles to development.

The cult of fertility and ancestor worship and a belief in life after death, which is universal throughout the world, all these were contribution made by the non-Aryan in Assam. These practices are similar to the Hindu practices. The worship of the goddess Sitala by the Hindus is similar to that of the tribal practices of worshipping deities of illness.

Most of the rites which formed the basis of the Assamese religious life were non-Aryan. The origin of most of the pitha's (holy places) are connected with the non-Aryan and pre-Aryan and later on recognised by the Hindus. The astronomical belief, mantras, magic, sorcery, worship of heavenly bodies, all these were attributed to the pre-Aryans elements.

All these rites and beliefs practised by the various racial elements in the earliest period formed the basis of the Assamese Hindu culture. Every people is more or less superstitious. Even today an Assamese is more superstitious and the magical traits formed the ground work of Assamese religious life

The foundation of the various cults in Assam was originated by the Austric, Alpine and Tibeto-Burman elements. As stated by Choudhury, "even after the spread of Hinduism, the non-Aryan cults continued to survive and influence it to a considerable extent, with the result that in a single religious centre, like Hazo or Kamakhya we find a meeting place of all the Aryan and non-Aryan faiths."³

Ancient Kamrupa or Pragjyotisha came into contact with Aryan Hinduism at a very early time, during the time of Naraka Bhagadatta. The non-Aryan religious practices had great influence on Aryan Hinduism, as well as on Hinduism of Assam. Before the advent of the Aryan religion in ancient Assam, the various faiths such as fertility, head-hunting, human sacrifice, Saktism and other animistic beliefs were practised in Assam. The Aryan religions in Assam assimilated some of these cults after reformation.

The various faiths such as Saivism, Tantrikism, Brahmanism,

Vaisnavism and Buddhism were in existence in the early Assamese society. The Aryan-Dharma and Brahmanical rites originated in ancient Assam during the reign of king Narakasura, the earliest king of Assam, who was a non-Aryan. It is found in the Purans and the Epics that the original inhabitants of Assam were driven out by Naraka and he established his kingdom and made Pragjyotishpur his capital and settled the Aryans in the country. According to Choudhury, 'the Brahmanical literature and the composition of Brahmanical works both by the Brahmans and the rulers indicate that the Aryan religion had gained some ground in the land at least by 5th-6th century A.D. if not earlier.'³ The Brahmanical religion had gained a strong hold in the Lauhitya region or Kamrupa as early as the Buddhist religion. Historical evidences have shown that Naraka and Bhagadatta settled numerous Brahmans in their kingdom and during their reign ancient Assam came under the influence of the Aryans.² The system of settling Brahmans in Assam was continued upto the Ahom period. The spread of the Aryan culture in Assam, as pointed out by Barua, 'the incomplete set of Nidhanpur copper plates alone bear the names of no less than two hundred and five Brahmans of various gotras and vedas; to whose families King Bhutivarman (600 A.D.) granted land in the Mayurasalmala Agrahana. Such Brahman's settlers doubtless spread the vedic culture in the province; and with the support of the kings, the movement received a great impetus from the 4th century A.D.'¹

The spread of the Brahmanism and Aryan dharma in ancient Assam was mainly due to the royal patronage. "As pointed out by Vidya Vinod, we find, in a single village in Kamrupa more than 200 families

of Brahmanas about 500 A.D."² As for instance, Bhutivarman donated lands in North-Bengal to as many as 205 Brahmas. Bhaskarvarman and his followers also donated land to the Brahmins. The gift of land was considered as meritorious, as the donor thereby, was believed to be relieved from rebirth.

There were many evidences both in the literature and epigraphs which are associated with the Tantrik faith and Brahmanism or Aryandharma made stronghold in Kamrupa in the earliest period. R.C. Majumdar says that 'Kamrupa retained the Brahmanical religion to the last.'³ During Bhaskarvarman age, as stated by K.L. Barua 'in his inscription, Bhaskar Varman is said to have revealed the light of Aryans religion in his kingdom by dispelling the accumulated darkness of the Kaliage.'² At first the Brahmanical religion was associated with the worship of the elements of nature but later on it consisted of the worship of personified deities.³ The names 'Kamrupa' and 'Pragjyotisha' also definitely points to the spread of the Aryandharma in ancient Assam.

Before the advent of the Aryans, Assam was the homeland of the Austrics, the Alpines and the different branches of the Tibeto-Burmans, these various racial elements had laid the foundation of various cults in Assam. In the opinion of Choudhury, naturally Brahmanism had to be modified to great extent in order to adjust to the local situation."³

There were many tirthas in Assam, some of which are believed to have been originally sacred places of non-Aryans and later on recognised by the Hindus. But the procedure of worshipping are different from one another, this is due to the rituals of different races.

In the early period, Saivism and Saktism prevailed in Assam and their influence upon the Tibeto-Burman people such as Koches were very significant, which continued even in the medieval period and still exist in Assam, but in a refined form. The worship of the mother goddess, Kamakhya and Siva or Sivalinga is said to have been adopted from the non-Aryans; in the Hinduism of Assam. Many also believed that Shiva is a Dravidian god baptised into the Trinity of Hinduism.

Saivism, the worship of linga and Yoni or the worship of Siva prevailed in Assam from a remote period and it was the form of religion which was associated with the pre-Aryan and Aryan elements in Assam. 'The number of sacred places connected with Siva worship is larger than that of places associated with Vishnu or Devi Worship.¹ In the History of Civilization of the people of Assam, Choudhury writes - "the Kalika purana mentions fifteen centres of the faith and describes that before the introduction of Devi worship in Kamakhya by Naraka, Siva was recognised as the guardian deity of the land ... and he was worshipped by the Kiratas.³ Siva worship was first introduced in early Assam by Jalpesvara, king of Jalpaiguri.² The Skanda Purana relates how the king became a Siva worshipper³ and he built a temple there. Saivism prevailed in Assam long before Naraka. Siva was privately worshipped by the earlier inhabitants of the country. 'Kakati considers Saivism in some gross form with wine and flesh was the prevailing religion of the aboriginal Kiratas.¹ The Yogiti Tantra refers the worship of the deity in his linga form. Ban Bhatta's Harsacharita refers to the Bhaskar's devotion to the lotus feet of Siva.³ The number of lingas in Kamrupa exceeds a million.¹

Epigraphs and various inscriptions refer to the worship of Siva in the early period. The grant of Vanamala states that Bhagadatta worshipped Siva, Vajradatta was devoted to Siva.¹ The Nidhanpur grant also records that Bhaskarvarman worshipped Siva. In the grants of Dharmapala, Siva is conceived, probably under the influence of Tantrik - Buddhism³. All the kings in the Pala dynasty worshipped Siva. Indrapala's first inscription states that his grandfather Ratnapala established numerous Siva Temples in the country. Indrapala himself was well versed in the tantras. It is clear from that Tantrikism had then been already introduced into the kingdom.² From the eight century when the Pala kings began to rule, Brahmanism gradually developed into Tantrikism. Saivism gained much popularity during the reign of the Pala rulers and Dharmapala and his predecessors were votaries of Tantrikism.²

In the opinion of B.K. Barua, 'the Saivism of the period was a fully developed religion with various sub-cults can be seen from the various names by which Siva is invoked in the Prasastis."¹

Yuan Tsang's report also states that during his visit to Kamrupa, there were hundreds of deva temples, many of which were probably dedicated to Siva.¹ Yuan Tsang also wrote that the people were, mostly Hindus. Bhaskar Varman was originally a devotee of God Siva.

Kamrupa is known as the land of Kamakhya. Kamrupa was the main centre of Devi worship. The Purana states that the Devi was worshipped in her different forms in different places.¹ The Yogini Tantra, the Kalika Purana also make the same statement. The worship of Sakti, originally a non-Aryan faith was practised by the Hindus. She is worshipped

in various forms such as Goddess Durga, Kali, Uma and the like. Narakasura worshipped the Goddess Kamakhya and he became responsible for the foundation of the Devi worship in Kamakhya. The Puranas and the Tantras also states Naraka was placed in charge of Kamakhya. The very names Kamrupa-Kamakhya suggest that the cult is derived from some Austric divinity.³ To Dr. Kakati 'this Yoni Goddess Kamakhya migrated into Assam with the migration of the Austric peoples. When Naraka founded kingdom in early Assam he established himself as the custodian of this Yoni Goddess."² The Tameswari Devi Temple at Sadiya was another centre of Devi Worship in different form (Kali). The Ugratara temple at Gauhati was also a centre of Devi temple. The worship of Tantrik-Buddhist Goddess Ugratara was established in Kamrupa in the Ugratara temple during the time of the Pala rulers.³ The pala rulers were the worshippers of Sakti.

Tantrikism existed in Assam in the earliest period - during the Koch period and the Ahom period and still it exists in Assam. Koch King Biswa Singha himself worshipped Goddess Durga. Nara Narayan was a worshipper of Kamakhya and his younger brother worshipped Durga. During the Koch period Saktism was the predominant form of Hinduism.⁴ During their reign, king Naranarayan rebuilt the temple of Kamakhya which the Muslims had destroyed. He imported many learned Brahmins from Bengal to conduct religious ceremonies. The descendants of the Koch kings both in the western and eastern portions, were mainly Saktas and they performed the worship of Durga annually in their capitals. The Koch kings accepted Hindu faith and helped in spreading it among their

subjects".⁸

The Chutia kings accepted the Hindu faith. There are similarities between their own tribal faith and the Tantrik faith. The Kesai-Khati temple of the Chutias near Sadiya is the great centre of the Sakti worship, where human sacrifice were offered.

Saivism spread among the Kacharis even at an early period. 'Some of the Mlechha kings of the early Kamrupa, whose tutelary deities are described as God Siva or Goddeess Parvati or Durga in the epigraphic records, surely belong to the Kachharis or widely speaking Tibeto-Burman group. ... God Siva and Goddeess Parvati are worshipped, even now, by different groups of Kachharis in their tribal manner, in different names."⁸ In the latter part of the medieval period, the Kachhari kings formally adopted the Hindu faith.

The Ahoms were described as the descendants of the Lord of Heaven, whom the Hindus call as Indra. Accordingly, many of the Ahom Gods, Goddess and legends were identified with Hindu God, Goddess and legends.⁷ The influence of Hinduism among the Ahoms was first entered with the accession of Sudangpha in 1397. "Under his influence, many Hindu rites and ceremonies began to be observed."⁶ The Ahom King Rudra Singha was a 'patron of Sakta Hinduism'.⁶ The Ahom kings also granted land to the Brahmans or Hindu temples.

The worship of goddess Durga came to be prevalent in Assam since the reign of the Ahom King Pratap Singha. 'Hinduism made a considerable progress in the Ahom Court, during the reign of the powerful Ahom King Shusengpha (Pratap Singha)⁸. He was a devout Saiva and

during his reign Saivism became a popular religion amongst his subjects. "During his reign the influence of Brahmans increased considerably. The Somdeo was still worshipped; and before a battle, it was still the practice to call upon the Deodhars or tribal priests to tell the omens by examining the legs of fowls. This, however, did not prevent the king from encouraging Hindu Priests ... temples for the worship of Siva were erected under the King's order at Dergaon and Bishnath, and grants of land were made for the maintenance of Brahmans and of Hindu temples."⁴ Sib singha was an orthodox Hindu. His queen Phuleswari was an orthodox Sakta. "Since then the Sakta faith came to receive royal recognition from the Ahom Kings"⁷ Queen Phuleswari forced the subjects to follow Sakta faith, as a result of this the flame of Moamoria Bidroh began.

The worship of various goddess continued to exist in the Medieval period also as in the early period.

Religious books and other old writings confirmed it that Devi worship and Tantrikism prevailed in Assam from the earliest period. "Throughout the medieval period, even down to the 18th century, the leading religion of Assam, however, seems to be Saktism."¹ In this connection, it will not be out of place to quote the remark made by K.L. Barua - "the Kamrupa kings from Indrapala to Dharmapala were followers of the tantrik tenet and about that period Kamakhya had become an important seat of Tantrik Buddhism."²

The various temples of Devi and different aspect of Sakti along with Siva and their icons confirm our belief that Saktism and Tantrikism had an important hold in the land from the early period. Even after

the Vaisnava reformation a large number of population remained Saktas. "Throughout the medieval period, even down to the 18th century, the leading religion of Assam, however, seems to be Saktism."¹ Even now there are many temples of Siva and Sakti, (Tantrikism) in Assam.

Towards the end of the Upanishad period Northern India developed both materially and culturally and among these developments, the most important was the spread of Buddhism. But from Yuan Chwang's account, it is found that Pragjyotisha remained free from Buddhistic influence. We find counter arguments whether Buddhism existed or not in ancient Assam. According to some scholars, Buddhism was unknown in ancient Assam. Yuan Chwang also writes that in the 7th Century A.D. the people of Kamrupa worshipped the devas. K.L. Barua states that 'according to Huen Chwang, there were a few Buddhists in the country but for the fear of persecution they had to perform their devotional rites in secret ... Silabhadra is said to have informed him, before he started from Kamrupa, that the law of Buddha had not then widely extended in that country. This indicates that Buddhism was then prevailing in the kingdom but not to a wide extent.'² But B.K. Barua says "Buddhism was not introduced into Kamrupa, and there are few or no indigenous images of the Buddha."¹ But Choudhury refuted it. In his opinion, "as regards Buddhism, we shall show that long before Yuan Chwang's visit there were traces of the faith in the land."³ "Hiuen Tsiang speaks very positively regarding the absence of Buddhists, both in his own time and at an earlier period. It was formerly thought that Buddhism had at one time vogue in Assam, but this view seems to have been erroneous. There is no trace of this

religion in the old records and inscriptions."⁴

According to Barua, 'in his account of the kingdom of Kamrupa, the Chinese Pilgrim Huen Tsang remarked that the people had no faith in Buddha and hence from the time when Buddha appeared in the world to the present time (7th century) there had never, as yet been built one Sangharama as a place for priests to assemble."¹

N.K. Bhallasali opines that until the time of Yuan Chwang there was no trace of Buddhism in Assam.³ But A. Roy holds that Buddhism flourished both in Kamrupa and Srihatta.³ In another place, Gait also states that Buddhism was wide spread in Assam.⁴ But there are some grounds to believe that Buddhism was prevalent in Assam. Choudhury quotes the remark made by Shakespeare according to which, Buddhism existed in Assam at an early period. The faith prevailed in the land even before the introduction of Hinduism, and many old temples might have been built on the old Buddhist sites.³

But it is clear that before Yuan Chwang's visit to Kamrupa, the law of the Buddha had spread into Kamrupa but it was not widely accepted as a faith by the people at large. Buddhism of the Mahayana sect alone was prevalent in Assam, probably the reason being Mahayana is akin to Hinduism. The Tibetan traditions, discovery of many Buddhist images in Assam, and the story that Sankaracharya, the great leader of Hindu revival in the beginning of the ninth century A.D. came to Kamrupa to defeat a Buddhist scholar, named Abhinavagupta in religious debates. This also proves that Buddhism had some influence in ancient Kamrupa. King Bhaskar Varman was himself not a Buddhist, he worshipped Siva,

but he was a patron of Buddhism. K.L. Barua is of the opinion that "the influence of Buddhism was felt in Kamrupa long before Bhaskar Varman came to occupy the throne. According to the Rajatarangini, the Kamrupa king of the fifth century, who was the father of Amritaprabha, was himself a Buddhist as his religious preceptor was a Tibetan Buddhist."² According to some scholars reason for controversy is that Kamrupa is not mentioned in early Buddhistic works and in the inscriptions of Asoka.³ Bhaskar's devotion to the Buddhist faith becomes evident from his last request to the pilgrim to stay in his kingdom - "If the master is able to dwell in my domains - I will undertake to found one hundred monasteries on the Master's behalf."²

Later on, Mahayana Buddhism was transformed into Tantric Buddhism or Bajrayana, when it came into contact with Sakti worship of the Hinduism. During the rule of the Pala dynasty, Tantrik Buddhism had great influence in Kamrup. Tantrik religion consists of mystic practices, mantras and magic or sorcery. Assam is famous as a land of Magic or sorcery in ancient India. 'Towards the last part of the early period, the different liberal sects of Buddhism, such as Bajrayana, Mahayana etc. got mixed up with Hindu Tantrikism and came to be more prominent in Assam; rather it may be said that practically they came to dominate over the whole field under the royal patronage of the Pala Kings.⁷ In Barua's opinion 'a very debased form of later Buddhism known as the Vajrayana system or the Sahajia cult was prevalent in Kamrupa for some centuries. ... The excess which are indulged in the name of religion under this system are too revolting to be enumerated. The Ratikhoa or Purnadharia sect of Assam, which continued till recent times, had its origin

undoubtedly in this system which was evidently a mixture of Tantrik Buddhism and tribal customs."² But in the medieval period, the influence of this form of Buddhism had to decline to a considerable extent. Yet the existence and influence of Buddhism still remained in Assam. It is also known from the 'Katha Guru Charita' that Sankardeva, the reformer, met many Buddhists in his early life, and the Koch king Naranarayana and Chilarai gave shelter to a Buddhist in their palace.⁶ Sankardeva tried to check the influence of Bajrayana form of Buddhism by the Vaisnavite movement, but could not succeed fully, Buddhism remained in Assam in one form or another.

Assam is principally a Vaisnavite state. Though the origin of Vaisnavism in Assam is uncertain, yet it is said that the worship of Visnu or Vaisnavism was prevalent in Assam from early period. "Vaisnavism was established in Assam at a time when Suryya worship and Brahmanical culture made considerable progress, and, as the evidence shows, the worship of both Visnu and his incarnation was prevalent in the land from early times."³ The rulers of ancient Assam had deep faith in the incarnation of God or Visnu through Naraka. There are various stories in the Puranas and Tantras, "according to these legends, Naraka was born of the earth by Visnu."⁴ The association of Krisna with the story of Bana and Bhisma also points to the fact of an early belief in the divine character of the God.³ The association of Visnu Krisna with Pragjyotisha is well known. 'In the Santi Parva of the Mahabharata, Visnu is called Pragjyotisha Jyestha."¹ The Kalika Purana describes in detail about the worship of Visnu-Vasudeva with rituals and mentions as many as five incarnations

of the deity as being worshipped in different places of Assam.³

The legend and mythology associated with thousand names of Visnu were well known and some at least became very popular of the inscriptions of the period, the earliest recorded reference to the worship of Visnu in Kamrupa occurs in the 'Badaganga Rock inscriptions of King Bhutivarman as Parama-daivata-Parama Bhagavata. Bana in his Harcharita describes Bhaskar Varman as a descendant of the Vaisnava family.¹ During the time of Dharmapala, with state support Vaisnavism came into prominence. The kings of Pala dynasty were devoted to the Boar incarnation of Vaisnu. Another 'avatar' of Visnu is Hayagriva, even today the people worship Visnu in the Hayagriva temple at Hajo.

The worship of avatara or incarnation is of course a notable feature of Vaisnavism in this period.¹ The most important 'avatara' in the later Vaisnava cult of the province is Krishna, whose account became the main theme of early Assamese literature.¹ Choudhury is right to say that 'it is wrong to hold that the faith had its origin in Assam only with the Vaisnava reformers, though it is true that the neo-Vaishnavism of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva differed a great deal from the earlier system, based on Tantrik rites.'³ There is, however, no doubt that previous to the propagation of the new Vaisnava tenet of Sri Sankardeva, a gross form of Tantrikism prevailed in the country.² Shankardeva and Madhav-deva, they are not only apostle of religion but also great reformers who tried to unite all the people belonging to different castes, communities and creed under one Dharma, known as 'Ek Sharan Bhagawati Dharma'. 'It is indeed a great achievement of the Medieval period that the distinte-

grated people belonging to different races could stand united to form a strong nation and a culture, preserving the dignity of a brave independent people by baffling the frequent terrible attacks made the great Moguls and the credit for this decidedly goes to the Ahoms, the Kochs and the Vaisnavite movement."⁸

Assam is principally a Vaisnavite state. The neo-Vaisnavism of Sankardeva contributed the lion's share in the cultural progress of the Assamese society. Actually, this new religion brought about a renaissance in Assam. Vaisnavism, based on Bhagavata-Purana and preached by Sri Sankardeva and his followers, during the 15th-16th centuries, was the main religion of the period, though worship of other deities were also prevailed in the country.

It is a quite known fact that during the 6th-7th centuries A.D., particularly during the reign of king Bhaskar Varman, Brahmanism or Hinduism had gained stronghold in Assam. But Hinduism could not penetrate deep into the vast non-Aryan population of the early period, as it could during the Medieval period, from the beginning of the 13th to the beginning of the 19th century. According to Choudhury, with the extinction of Pala rule in Assam around the 12 century A.D. and while the Tantrik Buddhist System became strong, there was a period of transition in the land, marked by ceremonies, until these were temporarily suppressed by the Vaisnava reformers.³ Saktism prevailed in Assam from the early period. In the early part of his life, Sankardeva, himself was a Sakta by tradition. Madhavdeva was also a Sakta before he met Sankardeva.

It is the neo-Vaisnavism, propounded by Sankardeva, which bound the people together with the feelings of fraternity and humanity and religion and cult. It was the neo-vaisnavism with its allegiance to one supreme God, its abhorrence of animal sacrifices, its freedom from esoteric rites and its simple ceremonial consisting only of hymns and prayers."² It recognised only the incarnatory deeds of Lord Krishna, he is the supreme head. According to this faith, the finite self is dependent on and cannot exist without the infinite self. According to Choudhury, many Tantrik Buddhist rites have crept also into the different phases of neo-Vaisnavism of later times through a process of absorption. It is also to be admitted that Vaisnava preachings and the Satras, established by the reformers, have fundamentally been based on those of the Buddhist of an earlier period.³

It is known from the Katha-Guru Charita, Sankardeva believed that the degradation of the people during the time was mainly for the influence of those mixed sects of Buddhism.⁶ It is also stated that Tantrikism was so deeply rooted in Assam that during his time he face a great antagonism from the Hindu orthodox and he and his followers subjected to persecution had to flee to Koch-Bihar and lived his last days under the protege of the Koch king Naranarayana.⁶ Gait is of the opinion that "Naranarayana's reign is remarkable for the Vaisnava reformation inaugurated by Sankardeva, a Kayasth of Batadroba in Nowgong

Sankardeva preached a purified Vishnuvism and inculcated the doctrine of salvation by faith and prayer rather than by sacrifices. He at first attempted to propagate his view in Ahom territory, but he was subjected

to so much persecution owing to the Brahmans who had the king's ear."⁴

Sankardeva preached a religion based on Gita and Bhagawata, at a time, when a degraded form of Tantrik Hinduism, which main characteristic was sacrifice of animals, even human beings, prevailed in Assam. The religion of Sankardeva is known as Mahapurushia Dharma, which is simple for the common people to practise and understand. According to this religion, the source of all energies or saktis is the supreme God Visnu who is formless. Visnu alone is to be worshipped, worship of idols and other minor deities is forbidden.² All men irrespective of their race, caste or religion are equal before Him. Sacrifices, rituals or ceremonies are unnecessary for salvation. Salvation can be attained only by faith and prayer. The Hindu Texts, however, until yesterday was obscure to almost all the people except for the few scholars of Sanskrit. Sankardeva translated Bhagavata into Assamese.

He received all classes of people, Garos, Bhutias, Nagas, Mikirs, Kaivartas, Brahmins and Sudras into the fold of his faith of Vaisnavism.

According to K.L. Barua, "the special feature of the new tenet was its uncompromising hostility to the worship of minor gods and goddess and animal sacrifice. According to the Vaisnava faith 'God was the only eternal, changeless spirit, the individual soul or Atman was a part of its, but all the rest was matter and therefore subject to change and decay. People who worshipped matter, being oblivious of the everlasting spirit, were fools."²

Though animal sacrifices were strictly forbidden, killing of animals for food was not prohibited. Even now the Assamese Vaisnavas eat meat

and fish. English travellers Ralph Fitch's view in this respect is "people did not kill animals to offer sacrifice before gods and goddesses."²

There is no caste rigidity in Vaisnavism, equality, spirituality and liberations of caste system, are the important features of the Vaisnavism in Assam. Due to the simplicity of Vaisnavism, many of the non-Aryan initiated to Hinduism.

Vaisnavism has advocated both honest earning and honest living. One who does immoral actions for one's livelihood, he must have to suffer.

Besides these major cults, sun-worship or Surya Puja, and the worship of minor deities such Ganesa, Agni, Kuvera, Manasa, Kartikeya, Indra etc. were also popular among some communities of the province. According to Choudhury, most of these were worshipped as consorts of other deities, such as Siva, Devi, Visnu and the like.³ The Kalika Purana also refers to the worship of most of these Gods and describes in detail the procedure of their worship.¹ Sun worship was very popular in ancient and Medieval Assam and it is still prevalent in the State. "The people of Kamrupa were worshippers of the sun prior to the advent of the Buddhist monk Dhitika who came there to convert them from sun-worship to Buddhism."¹

Inspite of the prevalence of so many Aryan and non-Aryan cults from the early period, yet perfect religious toleration was allowed to all faiths or cults by the rulers of Assam, though they belonged to one particular religion.

3.3 Present Status of Religion

From the ancient times Assam was known as the land of Kamakhya or the home of Tantrikism. During the medieval period, as regards religion, Vaisnavism based on the Bhagavat Purana and preached by Sri Sankar Deva and Madhabdeva, during the 15th-16th centuries was the main cult of the period. Since then Assam is principally a Vaisnavite state. But Assam had even changed with the influx of people from other states as tea garden labourers and the babus and the kulis and with the spread of trade and commerce which are mainly dominated by the non-Assamese.

The present population of Assam composed of different religious communities - Hindu, Islam, Christian, Jain, Sikh, Buddhist etc. Assamese society as a fact, is a mixture of different religions, races and castes. All these religious communities contribute in their own way for a strong national unity among them. Thus, Assam has yet to experience in the scale and degree communal violence which is unleashed in other states in India.

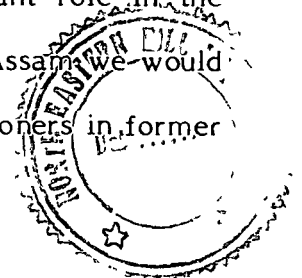
Hinduism is the main religion of the majority of the people in Assam. Hinduism is not a very tolerant religion specially the Hindu gods are sadistic but it absorbs many different faiths about the salvation of faith. Among the Assamese Hindus, some are worshippers of Devi, some are Saktas, others are Vaisnavas etc. Though they worship different yet there is complete harmony among themselves. It is known from the census reports that the Hindu population constitute 68.3% in 1971 in Assam. It increases to 70.29% in 1931, 72.01% in 1951, 71.33% in 1961 and 72.5%

in 1971.

The other members of the Assamese society are non-Hindus such as Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians, etc. The Islamic faith first entered into Assam in the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D., with the invasion of the Muhammadans. The Rock inscription of North Gauhati in 1205 A.D. mentioned the first Muhammadans (Turkish) who entered Kamrupa. According to this inscription and Minhajuddin's 'Tabaqat-i-Nassirs', the Muhammadans first invaded Kamrup under the leadership of Muhammad-Bin-Bakhtiar Khilji, a general of Mahammad Ghuri. Some of the soldiers of Mahammad died in the battle field and some remained here. These are the first Muslims of Assam.⁷ The Rock inscription of North-Gauhati records on the thirteenth of Chaitra, in the Saka 1127 (1206 A.D.), the Turks (Muslims) coming into Kamrupa were destroyed.²

Afterwards, the Muhammadans invaded Kamrupa several times and in this way, the Muhammadans settled in Assam gradually. In 1498 A.D. when Hussian Shah attacked Kamrupa king, at that period many Muhammadans families shifted to Kamrupa and settle near about Hazo. The first mosque in Assam was constructed near Hazo by Ghasuddin Aulia, who accompanied Hussian Shah.² The Ahom rulers invited Muslim artists, scholars and settled them in Assam. Most of the Muslims, living in Assam belong to the Sunni sect. They are living with their Hindu brothers and follow Hindu manners and customs. They play an important role in the Assamese national life. About the Muslims inhabitants of Assam we would like to quote 'As for the Musalmans who had been taken prisoners in former

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times and had chosen to marry here, their descendants act exactly in the manner of the Assamese, and have nothing of Islam except the name; their hearts are inclined far more towards mingling with the Assamese than towards association with Muslims.⁷

We would like to give a glimpse of religious Assam since 1911 as accorded by the census report. The Muslim population constitute 16.2% of the total population of Assam in 1911. The percentage increases to 22.78% in 1931, 24.68% in 1951, 25.30% in 1961 and 24.56% in 1971.

There was a 6% increase in Hindu population and 5.1% increase in Muslim population from 1911 to 1971. The increase in Muslim population is due to the influx of people coming from Bangladesh, also some of them are Bihari Muslims unwanted by Pakistan and Bangladesh. They came to Assam as farm labour. About 85% of the farm settlers are Muslims. Muslim immigrants surpassed the total of all other inflows to Assam.

A small portion of the total population of Assam are Christians. Christianity came into Assam with the establishment of the British rule in 1826 A.D. The British rulers with the aid of Christianity spread their ideas throughout the country and dominate the system. The British Government allowed the foreign missionaries free access to the tribal areas to propagate Christianity and introduce the western way of life. In 1911, the percentage of Christians in Assam was 0.59%, it increased to 1.42% in 1931, 2% in 1951, 2.43% in 1961 and 2.6% in 1971. Of course, the bulk of the Christian population now belong to Meghalaya and Mizoram.

Buddhism had some influence in Assam from the early period.

Buddhist faith is still prevalent in Assam. But it constitutes a small portion of the total population of Assam. In 1911, out of the total population of Assam 0.26% was Buddhists. In 1931 .25%, in 1951 .12% and in 1961 and 1971 .15%. The percentage of Buddhistic faith declined in Assam.

It is quite a known fact that the trade and commerce in Assam is controlled and dominated by the non-Assamese. The traders carry with them their own religion and this way -spread their religious ideas. The Jain population constitute .05% in 1911, .04% in 1931, .05% in 1951, .09% in 1961 and .09% in 1971.

Though the population of Assam composes of different religious communities and even though they profess different faiths, the harmony is not lost and the followers of all religions equally contribute to building up of a strong socio-religious fabric in Assam.

3.4 Economic Development from the early period to the 19th century, i.e. to the advent of the Britishers

Economic prosperity is a key to social and political development of a country. In ancient time Assam was economically a rich country with abundant natural resources.

From ancient time Assam was advanced in agriculture. Most of the people lived and still live in villages and agriculture was the main occupation of these people. Agriculture was the backbone of the state economy. Hiuen Chwang noted that the soil of Kamrupa was rich and the land was regularly cultivated. Cultivation was carried on by a crude method of Jhumming; which is still being practised by the tribal people

of Assam. Even in those days, the practice of irrigating land for cultivation was known. This was employed for terraced cultivation. Hiuen Chwang had also mentioned a net work of channels that supplied water to the fields and lands. B.K. Barua mentioned that the chief pursuit of the people was agriculture, the village site was generally placed along the river banks which made irrigation easy and the raising of crops more secure.¹ The expression 'Sajala Sthala', used in connection with most of the donated lands and other terms like Jala, Daba etc. indicates that the village fields were well-supplied with water.³ The Angami Nagas are said to have first introduced irrigation system in Assam.

In the Medieval period also all people were engaged in agriculture for livelihood. Though due to the improvement of industries, some were engaged in other industries and crafts yet they cultivated the paddy. During the Koch and the Ahom's reign, cultivation was done vigorously in the country. According to Robinson 'irrigation is practised to a very small extent, though the means of watering the crops are as abundant and convenient as in most parts of India.'⁹ The proverbial saying of the Assamese known as Dakar Bachan also reveals the existence of irrigation system in Assam.⁸

Construction of embankment is also not unknown in ancient Assam. Robinson writes there is no general system of embankment in Lower Assam, though partial embankments to guard against the inundations of particular streams at particular places are not uncommon.⁹

Robinson again says that inundations are no doubt very beneficial to some tracts which are so elevated that the inundation spreads over

them very gradually.⁹ But it seems that it also causes harm to the cultivation as well as to the country as a whole. So Robinson opines that the agriculture of Assam seems to suffer most from the imperfection of drainage. Those waters which traverse the valley, and one of the chief source of its fertility, often over spread the country in a manner extremely destructive.⁹

Assam produces several varieties of crops from the early period. It is proved from the old writings. According to Choudhury - the extensive cultivation of paddy, at least from the 6th century A.D., is proved by the fact that the areas of all donated lands are expressed in terms of the measures of paddy they produce.³

In the opinion of Robinson, the products of agriculture may be divided into three classes - food for man, which is almost exclusively grain; materials of manufacture, and vegetable luxuries.⁹ Rice being the staple food both for the plains and the hill people, the major part of the cultivated land was used for rice cultivation. The cultivation of rice was carried on both in the rainy season and in the dry season. Rice falls under three main heads - Sali, Ahu and Bao. 'The Yogini Tantra, for instance, mentions a number of varieties in connection with the worship of different deities.'³ According to Robinson, the rice crops, generally speaking, are not irrigated, but in some parts of the valley, where the means present themselves, rice is flooded from the hill streams. Occasionally, small fields of rice, situated near jheels, are irrigated by boiling up the water into small gutters prepared to carry it off.⁹

According to Robinson wheat, barley and millet are very little

used and the cultivation of them necessarily very small. It is known from Gait's history that according to a Muhammadan observer 'the chief crop of the country is rice, but the thin and long varieties of the grain are rare. Wheat, barley and lentils are not grown. The soil is fertile, whatever they sow or plant grows well.⁴ Maize was cultivated but not as an extensive crop. According to Robinson, maize is generally cultivated in small patches about the houses of the farmers ...".⁹

Sugar cane was another food crop. It was cultivated since the early period. 'Among the presents sent by Bhaskara to Harsa, included guda (malasses) prepared from the sugarcane in earthen pots.'³ The sugar cane of Assam, says Qazim, 'excels in softness and sweetness, and is of three colours - red, black and white.'¹ According to Robinson, among articles of luxurious consumption, sugar may be mentioned. ..."⁹. Besides paddy which was the main crop, mango, pumpkin, jack fruit, coconut, plantain and various kinds of vegetables and fruits were also grown in Assam from the early period. 'Pumpkins are still largely grown on the river bank of Assam.'¹ The abundance of jack fruit and coconut is evidenced by Yuan Chwang who states that in Kamrupa 'the jack fruit and coconut were in great esteem though plentiful.'³ Qazim writes - Assam produces mangoes, plantain, jack fruits, oranges, citrus, lemons pineapples and punialeh, a species of amleh which has such an excellence of flavour that every person who tastes it, prefers it to the plum. There are also coconut trees, pepper vines, areca trees and sadij (malabothrum) in great plenty.³ Shihabuddin writes - many kinds of ocorous fruits and herbs of Bengal and Hindusthan grow in Assam. We saw here certain varie-

ties of flowers and fruits both wild and cultivated, which are not to be met with elsewhere in the whole of India. The coconut and nim trees are rare; but pepper, spikenard, many species of lemon are abundant. Mangoes are full of worms, but plentiful, sweet and free from fibre, though yielding scanty juice.⁴ The cultivation of arecanut and betel vine is extensively done in Assam. It is supported by a number of literary sources and epigraphy of the early period as well as in the medieval period. 'The Nowgong Grant of Balavarman refer to the areca palms and betel vines which were extensively grown in the country. The plantation of haridra (turmeric), ardraka (ginger), jiaka (cumin) pipatiyaka (long pepper), marica (pepper), sarisa (mustard), karpura and others is evidence by the Yogini Tantra.³ The Austric tribes probably brought the pumpkin; the betel vine (tamula), the betelnut (Guvaka), plantain (Kadala), turmeric ginger and some vegetables like to brinjal.¹ The cultivation of pepper was found both in early and medieval period. Mustard seed was another important crop of Assam. According to Hamilton, 15,000 maunds of seeds were exported to Bengal from Assam during the period 1807-14"⁸ According to Robinson, a small quantity of indigo is cultivated by the Assamese in the vicinity of their villages. But the Mikirs seems to pay more attention to it, and by them it is pretty extensively used. The production of Tezpat was extensive in the hills and forests of Assam, mostly by tribes like the Garos, Abors and and Mishmis.⁹ Different varieties of pulses were cultivated in Assam.

Fibre plants was sufficiently cultivated in Assam. The cultivation of jute was very common and it was mainly cultivated in the districts

of Nowgong and Kamrup. 'The cotton plant is generally cultivated of Rhiza, Ban Rhia, different varieties of Pat were carried on by the Assamese. In the opinion of Robinson, tobacco was pretty generally cultivated, but to no great extent, and the tobacco raised is not adequate to the consumption of the country.⁹ The cultivation and consumption of opium entered Assam during the medieval period, more particularly towards the last part of the Ahom rule. According to Robinson, the raising of opium is a business of much delicacy, the poppy being a very tender plant and liable to injury from various causes.⁹

Lac was extensively cultivated in Assam from early times. According to Choudhury, the earliest reference to the lac insect is perhaps made by the classical writers.³ Assam produced the best lac in the whole of Asia. During the medieval period, the Ahom rulers appointed paiks for the rearing of lac insects. It can be said that from the early times Assam produced different varieties of important and essential agricultural products and the country was rich with agricultural products.

Ancient Assam was not only famous for her agricultural products, but also for her industrial products. The chief industries for which Assam was famous were textiles, dyeing, work in metal and ivory, bamboo and wood, hide and cane, etc. According to Robinson, 'immense as is the demand for human food, provision must also be made for clothing and other necessaries, and a proportion of the land employed in raising the materials of manufacture.⁹

In the opinion of Barua, there were craftsmen of many kinds in Kamrupa.¹ Choudhury also writes - in the development of various

industrial products, the craftsmen of Kamrupa had a place in ancient India.³ Cotton was cultivated throughout the whole country. It was more extensively cultivated by the hill tribes. In ancient times, besides the professional weavers, every house in Assam had its own room. 'The art of making cotton clothes has reached high perfection. Handloom industries are very common in every Assamese family. According to Barua, skill in the art of weaving and spinning has always been held to be one of the highest attainments of an Assamese woman.'¹ The cotton was used also for the purpose of making paper. According to Choudhury, the early use of cotton (tolapat) as a writing material is proved by some old Assamese manuscripts.³

Spinning and weaving was universally practised in the Medieval Assam. During the Ahom rule the weavers had a good reputation. They were even employed for the supply of royal robes of the Ahom kings.³

The existence of the professional weavers is known from the earliest times. In the medieval period fresh weavers known as Trantis and J alas have migrated from other parts of India and have made their permanent settlements here.⁸ In the medieval period the spinning and weaving was the main profession of a community of people known as Katani or Nath. During the Ahom rule, the art of weaving and spinning reached a stage of perfection. 'The Kalika Purana proves also the use and manufacture of woollen garments, dark clothes, silk and helm cloth.'³ The cotton and silk clothes were probably first introduced by the Bodos and other kindred tribes in Assam.⁸

From remote antiquity Assam enjoyed a reputation as producing

silk of a high degree of perfection.¹ The art of sericulture, and the rearing of cocoons for the manufacture of various silk clothes, were known to the Assamese as early as the Ramayana and the Arthasastra. ... The classical writers, beginning at least with the 1st century A.D. make important mention of the production of silk and the silk trade in and through Assam In the opinion of Watt, the silk industry originated in Manipur in Assam.³ The Muhammadan historian noticed that the silks of Assam were excellent and resembled those of China.¹ According to Hunter during the supremacy of the Ahom dynasty the industry was greatly encouraged and grants of lands were conferred upon the Jogis or weaving caste who were also exempted from the personal labour exacted by the state from all other classes."⁸

The three varieties of Indian silk generally known as Pat, Muga and Endi are specially associated with Assam. Muga silk is chiefly associated with Assam. The rearing of the silk worms, even today, is the main occupation of many castes of Assam. Assam was known as the country of 'cocoon rearers'. The Muga worms are mostly cultivated in the Sibsagar and Nowgong districts and other districts of Brahmaputra Valley. During the Medieval period, silk was regularly produced and reared by the Assamese people. The Ahom rulers appointed paiks from the Chutias and the Kachharis communities to increase the production of silk. During this period, Assam exported a considerable amount of this product.

The muga and endi silk of Assam were world famous. Endi cultivation was in existence since the early period. It was cultivated in the whole of the Brahmaputra valley.

Assam was also famous for various artistic works from the early period. The art of embroidery and dyeing was an ancient practice. According to Choudhury, the art of sericulture, weaving, embroidery, etc. was introduced into Assam at an early period by the pre-Aryans, Bodos and the allied tribes.³

Assam was also famous for ivory works and the art of working in metal particularly in gold and silver. The washing of gold was practised extensively during the Ahom period. The Ahom kings appointed paiks known as Sonowal for washing gold. Working in ivory was one of the most artistic industries in Assam. During the Ahom period, Mohammadans ivory workers were allowed to come over to Assam and to settle here permanently.⁸ Gold, silver, copper and iron were found in abundance in ancient Assam. The mineral wealth of Assam though in all probability abundant, is very imperfectly known.⁹

The manufacture of salt either from rocks or brine springs was an early practice. The manufacture of salt, like iron, therefore, was largely in the hands of the tribes.³

The forest of Assam was noted for their valuable woods, bamboos, canes and other natural resources. Since early times Assam was known for her wooden works. The art of wood carving is proved by Bana, who writes that the presents from Bhaskara to Harsha included carved boxes with panels.³ During the Medieval period, under the management and patronage of the kings and the Satra institutions wood carving was carried on to a great extent. Some of the Ahom kings invited many Mohammadan

Khanikars and established them in the Khanikar Gaon (guild).⁸ Besides these major works, other minor crafts like bamboo work, cane work, pottery work, stone work, brick work, leather work, mat making were practised in Assam since the early times. The extensive remains of temples and buildings and bridges give ample evidences of stone working and bricks working. The cultivation of bamboo and its use for various purposes were well known.

Assam is also famous for bell metal and brass works. The use of bell metal in the early times is proved by extent sculpture, utensils and ornaments.

All these proved that varied industrial arts were developed in Assam at an early period and were continued to be practised till recent times, based on traditions like those of the craftsmen of other parts of India.³

Trade and commerce were also well developed with the neighbouring countries. The economic resources of Kamrupa and her various agricultural and industrial products naturally led to the growth of both internal and external commerce. The country possibly exported more commodities than those imported from outside in the early period. In the medieval period also the state advanced both in the agricultural and industrial products and therefore, internal and external trade expanded during this period. Under the patronage of the Ahoms and the Koches, the trade and commerce had made great progress in the country. The commercial policy of the Ahom kings upto the reign of Gaurinath Singha was very strict, but afterwards, as a result of agreement signed between

the Ahom kings and Captain Welsh, the foreign traders, the East India Company succeeded in getting the facilities as well as prominence in the country. This has not only affected Assamese traders adversely depriving them of all the commercial benefits but also paved the way for opening up a new chapter of the British rule in Assam.⁸

Inscriptions refer to streets and good road connection between towns, both land and water connection with other lands are supported by literature. According to Barua, from very early times Assam was noted for her textiles and various valuable forest and mineral products. Many of these articles were exported to neighbouring provinces but found their way into Tibert, Burma and China. The trade with the neighbouring provinces was mainly carried by river transport.¹ Since early times boats, animals and human carriers were the chief means of transport. Both in internal and external trade boats were the main transport for carrying merchandise. According to Choudhury for interna' trade, besides boats, animals such as elephants, horses, carriages drawn by elephants and human carriers were engaged.³

Communications were by mountain passes in the north and north-east and land and water routes. According to Barua, the main route from Kamrupa to Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was by the rivers Brahmaputra and Ganges. Hiuen Tsang maintains that Bhaskarvarman and the former kings of Kamrupa had the sea-route to China under their special protection.¹ Besides the water way there was also a land route to China through the northern mountains of Assam. In the opinion of Choudhury, at a subsequent times numerous other routes were opened into China through Burma,

Bhutan and Tibet, and not only the people from the plains but also the hill tribes, the Abors, Dafalas and the Mishmis in particular were responsible for these early commercial contacts.³

During the medieval period, Assam maintained commercial relations with all the frontier tribes. According to Robinson, there was an open road from upper Assam into Burma, and thence to China by which a considerable trade in Chinese and Burmese manufactured goods was carried on at one time.⁹

Assam had close commercial relation with other states of India. From Hiuen Chwang's account, it is known that communications were regular and easy. According to Shihabuddin, innumerable boats passed through Gauhati from both sides.⁴ The river Brahmaputra was the main route through which boats were despatched to different parts of the state. During the Ahom rule many roads and dams for internal communication were constructed.

Assam exported a varieties of commodities to the neighbouring countries such as China, Tibet, Burma and also to other states of India from the very early period.

One of the chief articles of export was silk-muga and endi, both raw and manufactured. Assam was famous for her muga and eri silk. Assam exported eri silk to Bengal. According to Robinson, all the hill tribes, especially the Bhutias. The muga silk, both in its raw state and the manufactured stuffs, forms a considerable article of export.⁹

According to Robinson, 'Lac seems to be by far the principal

article of export. The quantities of stick lac annually exported, may be fairly computed at about 20,000 maunds. Its value in the province varies from five to nine rupees a maund.⁹ The export of lac to China and Japan is mentioned by Tavernier.³ Lac was also exported to Bhutan.

Assam also exported tezpat. Gold was also exported from Assam. Gold was brought to India from the rivers of Assam and Burma. Gold was sent to China. According to Robinson, 'Gold bullion to a large amount is annually exported from Assam'.⁹

Another important article of export was cotton. According to Robinson, in 1809, the total amount of cotton exported did not exceed 7,000 mounds.

Ivory was also exported from Assam. In the opinion of Robinson, ivory still continues to be exported in pretty large quantities. It is no doubt a very profitable article of commerce. The average quantity exported in 1809 was about 6,500 maunds, and it is very probable that the amount is now at least double.⁹

The other articles of export were buffalo, rhinoceros, hide and horns, iron, aloe, musk, cloth etc. According to Choudhury, the export of iron, hide, buffalo horns, pearls, including lac and silk to China through Burma and Tibet was also common.³

Mustard seeds was also exported from Assam. According to Robinson, besides the vast quantity consumed in the country for the manufacture of oil, by far the greater proportion of the seed raised is exported ... mustard seed forms about one-fifth part of the whole exports of the

country.⁹ According to Hamilton, 15,000 maunds of mustard seeds were exported to Bengal during the period 1807-14.⁸

Assam exported lac, manjit, silk-muga and eri and dried fish to Bhutan. The Khasis exported iron, potatoes and honey, these they exchanged mainly for clothes, silks and other products of the valley. The Nagas generally exchanged their own produce, such as cotton, salt, ginger for the produce of the plains.⁹ With the Garos, extensive cotton trade was carried out.

During the reign of Rudra Singha, considerable quantities of vessels made of bell-metal, brass and copper, were exported to Tibet and China.⁸

The exports from Assam to Bengal mainly consisted of various silk threads, stick lac, manjit, agar or aloe wood and elephants' tusks. The other minor articles exported from Assam were rice, paddy, wax, black pepper, long pepper, betel nuts, ao-tenga, thaikal fruit, jack fruit, etc.⁹

Assam imported some articles of necessity from the neighbouring countries. In the opinion of Robinson, articles of import are principally conveyed from Bengal. By far the most important article is salt. In 1809, the quantity imported was no less than 35,000 maunds. The other articles are of very inferior importance and value, they consist of copper, iron, European cutlery and glass ware; muslins, calicoes, pearls, corals and stone beads, shells, spices, fine pulse and sugar.⁹

Assam imported woollen clothes, gold dust, salt, musk, ponies, the celebrated Tibet chowries, Chinese silk and musk from Bhutan.⁸

All these prove that Assam exported many valuable commodities to other countries and also imported some articles of necessities and had important commercial relationship from the ancient times.

In the early times the value of the articles was measured in terms of commodities and all business transactions were carried on by barter system. Goods were exchanged for goods. According to Barua, unfortunately, no coins belonging to the period have yet been introduced.¹ According to Choudhury, it is not known when coins were for the first time used as a medium of exchange in Assam.³ Before the use of money as a medium of exchange, animals like cattle, animal skins, garments, rice, cowries etc. were used for barter. During the medieval period, the barter system was prevalent among the hill tribes and to a certain extent among the people of the plains. Barter system is still in existence among the hill and plain tribes.

Cowrie shells served as a medium of exchange in ancient and medieval Assam. The earlier reference to the use of Cowries is found in the Harsa Charita, Bana states that Bhaskar sent to Harsha 'heaps of black and white cowries are present.'³ The Tezpur rock inscription refers to a penalty of a hundred cowries for the infringement of a certain state regulation.¹ The literary works composed during the medieval period also mention the use of cowries as price. From the chronicles it is learnt that the value of an earthen utensil called Charu in Assamese was two cowries.⁸

The earliest reference to a silver coin probably from Kamrupa

is noticed in the Arthasastra which mentions it under the name of Gaulikam.³

Gold was also used as a medium of exchange in the early times. 'According to the Silimpur inscription (11th century A.D.) a Brahmana of Bengal (Verchari) was offered by King Jaypala of Kamrupa hemram satani nava, which Basak takes to mean nine hundred gold coins.¹ The inscription of Ratnapala mentions the existence of a copper mine, evidently copper was used for coinage also.¹ According to Robinson, on the acquisition of the province by the British Government, a variety of coins were found current in Assam; they were the Rajmohar or the coin of the Assam Rajas, the Naraiani or the Kochbehar rupee, the company's sicca rupee, the Debo Mohari of Bhutan and the Ascot rupee.⁹

These prove that cowries, coins, silver, gold and copper and exchange of goods for goods were used as a medium of exchange in Assam. In case of internal trade goods were exchanged for goods and in case of external trade, gold and silver were used as medium of exchange.

Land System :

Assam is pre-eminently an agricultural state since the early time. Land is one of the basic inputs for production in agriculture and allied activities. According to Barua, in matters of land, the Kamrupa kings followed the general northern Indian tradition, claimed that all land belonged to the crown.¹

In the early records we find division of lands such as Vastabhumi, Ksetra and Khila and Goprachanabhumi.³ This division of land was also

present in the medieval period. In the opinion of Barua, the recorded grants have to do with two main types of land, cultivable (Ksetra) and uncultivable or wasteland (Khila).⁴

During the Ahom rule, land were divided into rupit, patit, Bastoli, Basti, Pharingati (dry land), Jalah, Pitani.⁹

It is very difficult to know the land tenure system prevalent in the early period. Most of the transactions were of a religious character. "The major part of the cultivable land was held by the agriculturists who farmed it, the independent peasant proprietor (ryotwari) enjoyed small holdings sufficient for his wants. The right of occupation was hereditary, subject to the payment of dues and taxes to the king's officers or representatives."¹

The land revenue system did not exist in ancient Assam. The rulers granted land to the Brahmanas so that no tax was levied on them, this system was known as bhūmicchidra system.

Another land tenure system was rividharma or apradadharm.¹

Besides grants made to Brahmanas, land was also donated to temples or for various special religious purposes by kings, queens and state officials.

During the Ahom period, a considerable areas of arable land were assigned as rent-free or Lakhiraj for religious and charitable purposes. The different types of Lakhiraj or rest free estates were classified as Brahmattora, Dharmattora and Devottara.

The system of land revenue prevalent under the Ahom rule was, however, of personal service. Each pyke was allowed two puras of fertile

land free of rent in return for the service rendered to the king. If personal service was not required, he had to pay two rupees instead.

State revenues were raised in the forms of personal service, articles of produce and cash.

It was perhaps king Pratap Singha, who first introduced levy of money as tax in the state. King Pratap Singha introduced levy of taxes upon the commodities in the markets, the market places, fisheries etc. and the custom office, when he felt the want of money.⁸

The levy of taxes upon the commodities for sale as determined by the Ahom kings was not the same at all time and at all places.

3.5 Modern Economic Development

No one can deny that the foundation of the modern economic system of Assam was laid by the Britishers. After the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, Assam was under the sway of the British empire. The modern economic development of Assam based on capitalistic principle was possible mainly due to the development of tea plantations by the British Government. According to Gait, 'during the country for which Assam has been under British rule and enjoyed blessings of a settle Government, its material prosperity has increased rapidly. Its trade has grown, and its exports of mustard seed and potatoes (introduced in the Khasi Hills by David Scott), silk and other local produce have increased greatly, both in quantity and value.'⁴

Under the British rule there was a radical change in the economic condition of Assam. Establishment of tea industry was one of the great

achievements of the British regime. In 1833, the first tea garden was established in the Lakhimpur District in Assam by the British Government. According to Gait, 'by far the most important factor on the growing prosperity and commercial importance of the province has been the remarkable expansion of the tea industry.⁴ The tea industry was run by various private companies and enterprising individuals 'To encourage tea plantation in the province, the Government also made liberal provisions for the settlement of waste land for tea cultivation.⁵ In the opinion of Goswami, both in acreage and output the tea industry in Assam expanded very rapidly upto the 1920s.⁵ Tea industry provided employment to a large number of people and earned foreign exchange to the country.

Along with the tea industry, a number of different industries such as petroleum, saw mills, plywood factory, coal mining, general engineering works and river and railway transport, postal and telegraphic services, etc. were established which helped to the growth of modern industrial sector and commercial sector in Assam.

Oil industry is one of the chief industry in Assam. It was also discovered by the British in 1825; but the production of petroleum began only from 1899. The production increased from 11 million gallons in 1918 to 65 million gallon in 1946.

Coal was discovered in 1825, but production started after 1882. Most of the coal fields are situated in Makum.

New agrarian system was one of the important feature of the economic system of the pre-independence period. During the British period, the principal agricultural crops were rice, mustard, pulses, jute, cotton,

sugarcane, tea, etc. Assam exported a good quantity of rice regularly.

The British Government introduced the new revenue system in Assam. After the annexation of Assam, the paik system of Ahom kings was abolished. In lieu of this system, the payment of revenue for land was introduced. According to Gait, the only important alteration adopted was the imposition of a poll tax of three rupees per paik in lieu of the old liability to personal service for three or four months in the year. The Duty of collecting this tax was entrusted to the old staff of Khel officials ... The method of collection was, therefore, changed from a personal to a territorial basis. The whole area of a district was parcelled out into blocks called Mauza or mahals."⁴ Later on poll tax was abolished and a regular system of taxation on land was imposed on the basis of the actual land holdings of each person.⁵

The lands were classified under three heads - Ryotwari, Nispikheraj and Lakheraj or Zamindary. Lakharaj lands were rent-free.

Brahmottar lands were charged only fifty naya paisa per bigha. The Ryotwari land was assessed at Re.1 per bigha. In the middle of the year 1886 A.D., the annual settlement of land was replaced by settlement on 10, 20 or 30 years' lease respectively. The right of inheritance of landed property was recognised.

During the British rule indigenous textile industries were ruined. The cheap Lancashire cloth and machine products of England almost killed the ancient cottage industries of Assam. Thousands of weavers, potters, smiths and artisans were rendered unemployed. The prosperity of the country was greatly affected. The cheap British products occupied the

market.

Before the British rule in Assam, the transport and communication system was very poor. One of the most significant benefit of British rule in Assam was the steady improvement in the means of communications. In the opinion of Gait, 'something had already been done to improve communications, but they were still very bad'.⁴ With the interest of developing tea industry, petroleum and coal mining, the British Government did a lot in improving the communication system in Assam. A regular Public Works Department was established in 1868 A.D. and in 1880 A.D., local Boards were created for the management of local affairs, and were placed in charge of all roads of local importance. Gait states, when Mill visited Assam in 1833, carts and carriage were unknown, and the roads were few and bad. The two great trunk roads, which now run east and west along both banks of the Brahmaputra, had not at that time been commenced, and there were practically no roads at all in Sylhet and Cachar.⁴ After the first world war, Road Board was constituted at the provincial level in 1926-27 to improve the roadways.

In 1847 A.D., a steamer service on the Brahmaputra was started with the assistance of the Government. The service had been gradually improved. A similar service was established on the Surma river in 1887. The steamer service helped the state in exporting products such as tea, jute, timber etc. and also in importing other consumer goods at a very low cost.

In the pre-British period, there was no railway system in Assam. In 1881, the Assam Railways and Trading Company was formed by the

British and the construction work on the Dibru-Sadiya railway was undertaken. The first railway line from Dibrugarh steamer ghat to Jaipur road was inaugurated in 1882. The coal fields were connected by railway lines in 1884. In 1885 two small railways were constructed, one in the Jorhat Subdivision, and the other between Theriaghat and Companyganj.

The principal railway in the province, the Assam-Bengal State Railway was opened for traffic in 1905.⁵ During the period 1896 and 1933 there was rapid expansion of railway lines in Assam. The railway lines have been brought under the control of North-Eastern Frontier Railway.

The postal and telegraph and telephone communication also made progress during this period.

Assam had a huge potentiality for the development of power. The first electrical undertaking in the state was installed at Tezpur in 1913 for supplying electricity to the people.

It is true that British destroyed our independence and there was ruthless exploitation of our economic resources, but at the same time the British rule had conferred some significant benefit in our economic system.

After independence in 1947, Assam had made progress in economic, cultural and other spheres of national development. The constitution of the country has, no doubt, ensured not only equality before law but also equality of opportunity for all individuals irrespective of the religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Besides, certain directive principles

of state policy, which aim at social, economic and cultural reforms, have also been incorporated in the Constitution. In order to achieve these objectives, economic development got the top priority. Without educational, material and scientific advancement of the society, it was clearly felt that the change of the traditional paternalistic, agrarian Indian society into a modern, rational, technological, industrial and socialistic society was difficult. Therefore, sustained efforts were and are being made through a series of Five Year Plans to bring about radical change in all spheres of life. In 1951, along with the rest of India, the first five year plan was undertaken in Assam. The investment outlay of the State Government increased from Rs.20.50 crores in the First Plan to Rs. 2100 crores in the Seventh Plan. The overall results of progress over the last five year plans are noticeable.

Nearly 91% population of Assam lives in villages. More than 75% of the total population is dependant on agriculture for livelihood. The economy of Assam is predominantly agricultural. Assam produces both food crops and cash crops. The main food crops are rice; wheat, pulses, maize, potato and other vegetables and fruits. The principal cash crops are - tea, jute, tobacco, oil seeds, sugarcane, cotton. Rice is the staple food of the Assamese. There are three varieties of rice grown in Assam - Ahu, Sali and Bao. During the plan period productivity per acre has been increased due to the use of improved seeds, manures, implements and techniques, by irrigation facilities, through double or tripple cropping, flood control, etc. But the production of food crops are not sufficient to feed the population. Assam has to import food crops

from other states regularly. During the First Plan Period, 231.14 thousand tonnes of additional foodgrains was produced and 1631.59 thousand acres of land were brought under the minor irrigation system. The volume of foodgrains production was increased by 18% whereas non-food output increased by 79% during the first plan. Upto 1981, the production of foodgrains increased to 27.08 lakh tonnes. The production of other agricultural products such as tea, jute, sugarcane, etc. has increased but not in a considerable amount. Upto the end of 1980-81, a total of 3.58 lakh hectares of irrigation potential was created in Assam. The main reason for the backwardness of the field of irrigation are inadequate attention of the Government, lack of fund and lack of peoples' cooperation.¹

During the plan period various agencies have been established to improve the social, economic and cultural condition of the people. Besides land reforms - land ceilings, regulation of rent and tenure, abolition of zamindari system etc. have been initiated to help the landless farmers and marginal farmers and thereby improve the agricultural productivity of Assam. The land reform measures introduced during different period since independence are the Assam Acquisition of Zamindari Act, 1948, the Assam Adhiars Protection and Regulation Act, 1955, the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1947, the Assam Consolidation of Holdings Act, 1960, the Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holdings Act, 1956, the Assam Tenancy Act, 1971. Moreover, several new measures have been undertaken by the Government either by amending the old acts or by passing new acts in the fold of land management with a view to improve the condition of the rural people.

The agricultural sector requires various facilities like credit, irrigation, consolidation of holdings, marketing, supplementary occupation by developing cottage and small scale industries, consumers' cooperatives etc. which can be met effectively with the spread of cooperatives in these fields. With the introduction of economic planning in 1951, the state government laid great stress to strengthen the cooperative societies.

Assam is rich in various natural resources - mineral, forest, power, etc. In spite of these resources, in resource based and demand based industries, Assam is one of the industrially backward states of India. The tea, coal and petroleum industries are the only large-scale industries in Assam.

The manufacturing industries in Assam are a few plywood, cement and match factories, paper etc. Major industrial products include tea, coal, matches, plywood, sugar, fertilizers, jute, textiles, petroleum crude and refinery products, wheat flour, paper, and cement. During the plan period, in the industrial sector, various policies have been adopted not only to promote diverse and modern large-scale industries but also to rehabilitate and modernise the village and small industries. The important achievements during the five year plans in Assam are the establishment of Nunmati Refinery, Bongaigaon Refinery, Petro-Chemicals at Namrup and Bongaigaon, Fertilizers at Namrupa, Bokajan Cement Factory, Sugar Mill in the cooperative sector at Dergoan, Jagiroad Spun Silk mill, Paper Mills, Jute Mill, Plywood factories, Saw Mills, Spinning Mills, Gas distribution projects, etc. The large-scale and medium scale industries are found both in the public sector and private sectors. The employment in these industries has increased to nearly 84 thousand man days. The total number of regis-

tered factories in Assam has increased from 911 in 1951 to 2090 in 1981. Still industrial development in Assam is not satisfactory. Traditional tea and oil industries are still dominating the economy of Assam.

Cottage and small industries play an important role and they dominate the rural economic structure. In 1951 the total number of registered factories was 94, but at the end of March, 1981, Assam had a total of 12,056 registered small-scale industries which employed 62,000 persons. Assam is famous for her handloom industries, bell-metal, ivory works, pottery works etc.

Attempts have been made to spread education and to promote skills all over the state. The number of institutions and the number of enrolled have increased and the number of graduates and post-graduate and technical personnel have increased. In spite of this increase in the number, the overall literacy rate is only 29.2%. The female literacy rate is much poor, it is only 18.6%.

The growth of banking service and other financial institutions is another important indicator of economic development. The availability of banking facilities in Assam was quite inadequate until tomorrow. During the last few years Assam shows some improvement in this field. The number of commercial banks increases from 96 in 1970 to 562 in 1982. At the end of March, 1982, the rural area of Assam had as many as 306 bank offices which constitute 54% of the total banks.

In recent times regional rural banks have been set up in Assam. Assam has at present five regional banks. To provide financial assistance, the government of Assam established several financial institutions

as Industrial Finance Corporation, State Financial Corporation, Life Insurance Corporation, Small Industrial Development Corporation and the like.

The economic development of a country mainly depends on its infra-structural developments such as - transport and communications, power education and health, etc. A change in the nature of consumption of power is an important indicator of social change facilitating rapid economic development. Assam is rich in power resources potential. But Assam is still deficient in respect of generation and consumption of power. The Assam State Electricity Board was set up in 1958. Assam alone had 28 percent of the total hydro-electric power potential of the country but remains under utilized. The second five year plan took some important steps for both increased generation and consumption of electricity. The per capita consumption of electricity was increased from 0.91 KWH at the end of 1950-51 to 5.63 KWH at the end of Second Plan. Total capacity of power in Assam increased to 311.4 MW at the end of 1982-83. Total amount of power generation within Assam cannot meet the entire home demand thus the state continues to receive power supply from Meghalaya. But at the same time Assam also supplies power to Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Bhutan and North Bengal.

The development of transport and communication is another major factor which can help to improve the economic outlook of the people. Although the expansion of transport and communication has significantly advanced during the plan periods, there are still many areas in the state which are yet to get the benefit of good transport and communication.

The early history of the development of transport system was associated with the development of the tea industry. Until the beginning of the present century river transport had mainly been used.⁵

From early times until the introduction of railway, the chief means of communication was by boats. Water transport still plays an important role. There are two river systems - the Brahmaputra and the Barak-Kushiara and their tributaries in the south. Assam had a total waterways of 5200 Kms in 1981-82. There are two public sector organizations - the *State Directorate of Inland Water Transport* and the *Central Inland Water Transport* in the state for the development of water ways.

At the time of independence, Assam had only 2610 miles of motorable roads including the national highways, of which 2040 miles were in the plains.⁵ During the five year plans road transport system has been developed to a considerable extent. In March, 1983, the length of roads under the P.W.D. were - National Highways - 2002 Kms, State High Ways - 1,302 Kms, other P.W.D. roads - 20,423 Kms.⁵ The great achievement of the plan periods in case of transportation is the construction of two bridges on the Brahmaputra. The third one is under construction. In Assam, both the public and private sectors are providing road transport services. After the nationalisation of the road transport service, the Assam State Transport Corporation became one of the important public utility services in the state; which provides both goods and passengers traffic in selected routes. The state also provides transport facilities in the hill areas.

Railways serve as the main communication link between Assam

and the rest of India. The total length of railways route in Assam increased from 1758 kms in 1960-61 to 2178.55 kms in 1982. In 1983-84, the broad gauge route covered 262 km and metre gauge 2075 kms - a total of 2337 kms in Assam. In 1987 the total railway route length of Assam is 2349.55 kms with the expansion of broad gauge line to the extent of 171 km from New Bongaigaon to Gauhati. The railways of Assam has great economic significance as the development of coal, oil and tea industries depend to a large extent on railway industry.

During the plan periods as a result of the development programmes, the per capita income and state income in Assam rises to a smaller extent. The figures of the state income and per-capita income showed a relatively smaller increase in Assam than for all India. The percentage of increase in the per-capita income for all India was 10.6% during 1950-51, the increase in Assam was only 7.2% in 1950-51. The state income at constant prices rose from Rs.223.6 crores in 1950-51 to Rs.1107.2 crores in 1981-82. The growth rate of per capita income at constant prices was only 4.9% during the first plan period as against 8.2% in case of all India. The per capita income increased from Rs. 237 in 1950-51 to Rs. 546 in 1981-82. The growth rate of income is very poor in Assam.

Though after independence due to the attempts by the State government, the progress of Assam is more rapid than under the British rule, still it cannot be deny that the economy of Assam is an under-developed one. Every state has its own problems. Assam is also a problem state. But her economy is full of potentialities. Both the economic and non-economic factors stand as a constraint in her economic development.

Both economic and non-economic factors are equally responsible for this poor rate of development attained by the state.

3.6 Social Institutions

Social institutions, some of them of a religious nature, play a very significant role in the formation of Assamese Society. As we know there is a close relationship between the social, cultural and economic and religious factors. Social institutions perform manifold activities to build a strong nation. It can also play a significant role to strengthen the national unity of a country. These institutions are largely depended on customs, rites and rituals and attitudes of the people, which are mimical to socio-economic development in a considerable extent.

Joint family system is a social institution. This institution was very popular in ancient time when population was not a problem of the country. There is social security in the joint family system. But from the economic point of view, the joint family system creates under employment and makes savings difficult. This system started declining its popularity with the growth of industries and disintegration of the old feudal system.

The caste system in India is a religious institution. The foundation of the social system of ancient Kamrupa was based on caste system or Varnasrama Dharma. The protection of the caste system was the chief duty of the king. The society was divided into four classes - Brahmana, Ksatriya, Vaisha and Sudra. The Brahmanas who were at the head of this system received great honour from all. But the caste system is not so

rigid in Assam as in other parts of India.

Among the social institutions, that of marriage is, in many ways, the most important. The institution of marriage has greatly contributed towards the unity and solidarity of the Hindu society. In a Hindu society, a marriage is performed after receiving social and religious sanction.

The law of inheritance is another institution prevalent in Assam. It has adverse economic effect. It resulted in minute sub-division and fragmentation of land holdings; which results in low agricultural productivity.

Besides these institutions, there are some other institutions such as temples, Namghars and Sattras, which have played a significant role in the socio-economic and cultural life of the Assamese society since the early times. The influences of these institutions on Assamese people are manifold.

Temples performed and still perform a very important role in the socio-cultural life of the Assamese people. The Rajas and Maharajas of the early Assam and medieval Assam constructed innumerable temples in different parts of Assam. These temples are still in existence including Hazo, Dubi, Dergaon, Kamakhya, Biswanath, Sibsagar. These temples are still carrying on their religious activities to a certain extent. According to Choudhury, the temples were the places of occasional festivals, attended by people of both sexes, young and old, who took part not only in the performance of drama, music and dancing but also listened to important religious discussions. All these activities helped a great deal in the

interchange of ideas and the diffusion of knowledge among people of all walks of life, irrespective of colour or creed.³

The temples served as the best place for the neighbouring people to assemble not only to enjoy cultural functions, but also to discuss and settle their social problems.

The rulers of Assam donated lands, paiks and professional people for the service in the temples.

Namghars are another institution of Assam. With the spread of Vaisnavism preached by Sandar Deva, the Namghars come into existence. In every Hindu village there is at least one Namghars. It is the creation of the Vasnavas. There is no caste rigidity in Vaisnavism. Hence every one irrespective of caste can enjoy equal shares in the Namghar. Even the Muslim people can demand justice in the Namghar.

It is the socio-religious cum cultural centre of the Assamese people. The influence of namghar on the Assamese society is manifold. It is the prayer hall of the Hindus in Assam. 'This is the place where the inhabitants put their heads together to discuss matters regarding social economic and other problems of the village.'⁸ The namghar also performs welfare services, such as to construct road, to dig tank and like other public works. When a problem arises, they assemble together to discuss the problem and take decision to solve the problem. Thus it can strengthen the spirit of cooperation. It also encourages in the growth of village industries - such as bamboo work, cane work, etc.

Since the medieval period, the Sattrra institution occupied a promi-

nent place in the socio-religious life of the Assamese society. 'The Sattra came into existence after the demise of Sankar Deva. They were really moulded on the Buddhist Viharas.'² 'It has entered into the very texture of the Assamese society as such it forms a vital part of the Assamese social system.'⁸ The followers of Sankardeva are classified as Mahapurusia and Bamunia Gossain. They set up Sattras in different parts of Assam. The most important are those at Auniati, Dakhinpat, Garmur and Kurua Bahi in the Majuli. According to Rajguru, for conducting the religious services and for smooth and efficient management of the Sattra, several functionaries are appointed in the different branches of it. According to the size and status of the Sattras, the functionaries vary in number.⁸ The main object of this institution is to propagate faith. According to Choudhury, temples and religious establishments like those of Vaisnava Sattra, of Assam, organised on the system of Buddhist Monasteries, where discussions of all kinds were daily held, contributed more than any other centre to the spread of social, if not literary, education.³ This also served as educational institutions, when there was no school for learning. 'When the state of Assam were indifferent towards education, these satra institutions were serving as the centres of education and learning ... The Sattra of Assam which were originally the centres of propagation of religion, later on turned into educational and literary centres also.'⁸

The contribution of Satras to Assamese Society is numerous. Besides rendering valuable services in the socio-religious, it also helps in the development of cottage and village industries. It helps in the growth of bamboo and cane industries and wood carving and thus enriched the

economy of Assam. But at the same time, it cannot be denied that it had also some adverse effect on the development of the country. When the country is in need of manpower resources, at that time these institutions exempted many of the labour force to remain inactive. It is really very harmful for the nation as a whole from the view of economic prosperity.

Conclusions

Assam is in many respects a country of exceptional interest. Assam is the gateway of North-East India. The inhabitants of Assam is an admixture of different heterogenous elements. In Assam plains, large section of population are of mixed origin and the tribal people are Mongolians. It is a state of diverse language, races, castes, religions, social customs. In early times, Assam is known as Kamrupa or Pragjyotishpur, Assam, was the greatest kingdom with some smaller independent kingdoms. The ruler ruled according to the Hindu laws.

During the Ahom rule Assamese society reached its zenith.

The economic resources of Assam attracted the foreigners. Lured by natural and economic resources, foreign invaders invaded Kamrup several times. Assam produced variety of commodities and exported her products to far west. The British rule in Assam also introduced a new chapter. The British rule had a destructive as well as a regenerating role in Assam. The British rule had some significant benefits both in economic and social fields. The British introduced the tea plantation, oil industry, railways, coal fields, etc. Industrial development of Assam started during the British rule.

Though valuable natural resources are within the possession of Assam, yet Assam is still an economically backward state. During the five year plans, attempts have been made by the Government to develop, but they failed to attain any marked success in this direction. The process of development is very slow. Assam is full of potentialities. For socio-economic development efforts on the part of the Government is not sufficient. Social changes and progress are considered to be essential for development process. The dominance of traditional, social and cultural outlook leading to the low response to modern changes have prevented the development of the State. Thus attempts to eliminate the social rigidities should be given top priority in the policies and programmes of the state. The outlook and social institutions still continue to be influenced by the deep rooted traditional values, religion and caste and cultural system.

Only an intimate relationship between the Government machinery and the people, based on mutual confidence and love, will be able to initiate socio-economic change in Assam.

3.8 Apology and Summary

In the foregoing sub section, where we have discussed the historical evolution and economic prosperity of Assam, hardly we have any concrete knowledge about economic policy either from the historians or from the great Chinese traveller, Huan Chwang. In the past there was nothing of importance except the political upheavals and the formation of states. Of course, in this turmoil hardly any economic institutions, worth the

name, could be surviving. As we have already mentioned elsewhere, we did not have either economic institutions or academic institutions in the past, which could help the formation of an economic order in the sense understood by economists. We can make the following observations :

1) The religious turbulence was always associated with political turbulence which negatise any social welfare approach to economic justice. That was so in the past.

2) We did not have one school of thought specially in Hinduism where one can formulate a sound economic policy.

3) Because of diversity of social and ethnic groups coupled with multiplicity of Hindu code of conduct, nobody had even thought of evolving an economic order, as in the case of Christianity in the west. We have found that trade prospered in Assam in the medieval period, but we do not know who were the traders, how it was organised, what did they do for foreign exchange, and what did the state exchequer benefit from trade.

4) The so-called 'Arthaniti' of Chanakya is a mixture of pebbles and precious stones. It has no codified principles to implement the economic policy enunciated therein.

5) A social welfare policy should have been the basis of a capitalist economic order as in the west. But this we have never heard of in India until the 20th century; when the Indian intellectuals begin to study the western ethics and their values. We do not have in the past in India, a philosopher like Spinoza or Socrates, who talked of values and systems with exclusion of dogmatic philosophical zargon of life and

soul. Only now we have realized that moral values are in no way helpful unless we have the social values; the principle of collective unpassibility.

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CHAPTER IV
DATA-BASE AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter relates to the basis of our data and the empirical investigation. The sampling technique for social sciences and mostly so for social variables is always burdened with lots of biases not only for the sampling itself but also from the view point of the interviewers and interviewed. The scholar herself collected the data instead of using the interviewers in order to ensure the reliability of data as well as the households are concerned. Since religion is a very sensitive issue, probably except for western Europe, fundamentalism rising up in a menacing scale. Although Assam has been exceptionally a peaceful state so far the communal disturbances is concerned, yet this impact of so-called national mainstream beginning to stir up communal disfavour. We have selected only a limited number of households, i.e. 30% of the total households on a very representative scale so that there will be no bias so far as the representative household is concerned.

For an empirical investigation into the role of faith in the economic prosperity it is not difficult but faced with some sensitive constraints. The data that are available in the census reports are global and we want to make a micro level analysis. For this purpose, we selected Nowgoan district of Assam which has comparatively larger Muslim population. We took two semi urban areas known as Aminpatty and Fauzdaripatty where there are people of different faiths lived for considerable period of time adjacent to the Nowgoan town.

We did not apply any specific sampling procedure because we were afraid in the case of sampling there might be over representation of one community in the sample. This is because although the two locali-

ties are predominantly inhabited by the people belonging to mainly Muslim and Hindu faith.

We took 30% of the household, i.e. 215 out of 750 households. We collected the data using a very comprehensive but less exhaustive questionnaire on population, family size, income, education, occupation, communication, landholding, consumption of some specific items (which are considered to be consumed by non-orthodox) and their habit of visiting the house of God and political affiliation. Of these 215 households are surveyed, 112 of these are Hindus, 95 of them are Muslims and other 8 households belonged to Sikh, Jain and Manipuri Maitei faiths.

When we come to analyse we thought that probit analysis would be applicable to this kind of analysis where we can take religion as a stimulant and consumption as the reaction. But we found that after doing the empirical analysis that probit analysis does not hold good, we assumed that may be due to the paucity of data, probit analysis was not successful. Then we have applied the Reaction Function as developed by Bez to analyse consumption schedule of the different communities specially Hindu and Muslim for this purpose.

We have also made a descriptive study to compare the two communities in terms of income, consumption habit, attending prayers, political participation and news media.

4.2 Reaction Functional Approach

This is a probability model to analyse a third variable using the reaction approach of the two other variables supposing economic concepts if we consider consumption as a function of income and price, then we

can consider that given a specific price to a specific income group the consumption will be considered as a resultant of this specific price and income. The domain of both price and income varies over a period of time even for a limited spatial group of consumers. Again, income is also varying from consumer to consumer assuming that there is no other extraneous influence upon the consumers. His decision to buy a certain good will depend on his income and the price of the commodity. Likewise, we have assumed given the Hindus and Muslims, two specific groups belonging to the same space has varied income and varied prices in order to arrange their consumption schedules. This can be illustrated in the following way as propounded by Bez (Bez, 1980)¹. Consider the reaction function

$$R = U(O, A)$$

where R = Reaction

O = Object

A = Agent

Whose frame of reference is given by

O	O ₁ ... O _j ... O _n	Total
A	R = U(O _i , A _j)	⋮
A ₁		⋮
⋮		A _j
A _n		⋮
Total	→ O _i ←	

We can write down the reaction functions for agent A₁

against the object O_j and that of agent A_i against O_1 as follows :

$$R_{1j} = U_{1j} (A_1, O_j)$$

$$= U_{11} (A_1, O_1) + U_{12} (A_1, O_2) + \dots + U_{1n} (A_1, O_n)$$

and

$$R_{i1} = U_{i1} (A_i, O_1)$$

$$= U_{11} (A_1, O_1) + U_{21} (A_2, O_1) + \dots + U_{n1} (A_n, O_1)$$

Now we can translate the model for our own specific use as follows. The frame of reference income-expenditure and consumption schedule can be represented by the following matrix

$$F = R(Y,E)$$

	Y_j	
E_i	(F_{ij})	

where

F relates to the number of families

Y relates to income groups

E relates to expenditure groups

for any particular community, while the F_{ij} matrix relates to number of families, i.e. the consumer groups. Now in this instance, we can explain a way that given a set of income say - Y_1 , the consumption expenditure for the whole set will be determined by the reaction of that particular

income alone. Similarly, given a fixed expenditure say E_1 with respect to whole set of income group Y_j there will be another set of consumers. In this instance, if we consider Hinduism as the common factor for all and with respect to a limited locality then the consumption responses must be determined by expenditure and income alone. Similarly, we can also have a frame of reference to the Muslim consumers too. Since it is a probability model, in the ultimate analysis we could see later will tell us which group between the two i.e. Hindu and Muslim is rational in the case of consumption.

For empirical purpose, we adopt the following device :

$$F_{11} \neq F_{12} \neq \dots = F_{1n}$$

and

$$F_{21} \neq F_{22} \neq \dots = F_{2n} \text{ etc.}$$

Bez defined a conditional probability function

$$P(F_{ij}/E_i, Y_j, F) = \sum P [F_{ij}^{(r)}/E_i, Y_j, F]$$

where

F = unrealizable universe of F_{ij}

$r = 0$, where there is no reaction

$r = 1$, where there is reaction

P = associated probability for each consecutive reaction.

The sum of the probabilities should add up to one, i.e. certainty, which never happens in empirical case.

Now considering 2 different sets of $f^{(r)}$ and $f^{(q)}$ of responses as a result of interaction between income and consumption expenditure

given, the F_{ij} matrix of families can be written following the conventional law of conditional probability as often we apply in consumption function, market share analysis and investment functions as follows -

$$P [f^{(r)}/F_{ij}] = \frac{P [f^{(r)}/F^{(1)}] P [F^{(1)}]}{P [F^{(1)}/F_{ij}]}$$

and

$$P [f^{(q)}/F_{ij}] = \frac{P [f^{(q)}/F^{(1)}] P [F^{(1)}]}{P [F^{(1)}/F_{ij}]}$$

Finally, Bez defined the 'plausible' probability function,

$$P [f^{(r)}/F_{ij}] = \frac{P [f^{(r)}/F^{(1)}]}{P [f^{(r)}/F^{(1)}] + P [f^{(a)}/F^{(1)}]}$$

$$= \frac{P [f^{(r)} / F^{(1)}]}{\sum P [f^{(r+q)}/F^{(1)}]}$$

The last relation in terms of probability can be interpreted as relative share for any of the determinants with respect to the one fixed value of the other determinant. This last relation is used to translate probability to proportionality;

$$\sum_j F_{ij} = \frac{f_{ij}}{\sum_j F_{ij}}$$

$$\sum_i F_{ij} = \frac{f_{ij}}{\sum_i f_{ij}}$$

For the purpose of empirical analysis, the reference matrix is written in terms of logarithmic values,

	Y_1	Y_2	Y_3	Y_4	Y_5	Total
E_1	f_{11}	f_{12}	f_{13}	f_{14}	f_{15}	f_1
E_2	f_{21}	f_{22}	f_{23}	f_{24}	f_{25}	f_2
E_3	f_{31}	f_{32}	f_{33}	f_{34}	f_{35}	f_3
E_4	f_{41}	f_{42}	f_{43}	f_{44}	f_{45}	f_4
E_5	f_{51}	f_{52}	f_{53}	f_{54}	f_{55}	f_5
Total	f_{11}	f_{12}	f_{13}	f_{14}	f_{15}	

We have plotted the logarithmic values and obtained the following trend lines (Figs. 1-10).

4.3 Interpretation of the Graphs

One of the basic objectives to analyse socio-economic data through the application of Reaction Function is to exclude all the extraneous influences that might react with the occurrence of the studied variable. Most often, economic analysis with the econometric models cannot performed empirical investigation without the interaction of other factors. This model aims at objective analysis by excluding all the other factors namely - personal choice, market trend, or indistinguishable price variations among the different commodities. We assumed that the consumption schedule is determined by only two factors, namely - income and expenditure slab of the individual family. Remotely, we want to find also whether there could be any inherent differences in the consumption schedule

influenced by religious agent. Hence, our object and agent, i.e. income and expenditure both reacted to produce the quantum of consumption in the respective households.

Since, it is a probability model, and like any other probability model, it expected good behaviour of the variable for authentic interpretation.

We have shown already how we have transformed the data into logical values which we have now plotted in the graph paper as shown in the figures. According to our interpretation of the model, all lines of expenditures should have a unit slope to make sure that the expenditure is only the interaction of the income and total expenditure of the family.

Case I :

In the expenditure range Rs.100-150 for Muslims, all the points nearly fall on the line which gives a best fit. However, the line does not have unit slope, which could be interpreted as that with the rise in income there is the tendency to increase also the expenditure.

Case II:

In the expenditure range Rs.150-200, again for the Muslims, the line has a unit slope, but two of the points are lying far away from the line. But it has unit slope.

Case III :

In the expenditure range Rs.200-250, five observations are falling on the line and only one is lying far away from the line. It has also slope

higher than unity.

Case IV :

In the expenditure range Rs.250-300, again for Muslims out of six observations, four fall on the line and the line has a unit slope.

Case V :

In the expenditure range Rs.300-350, only two points lie very far away from the line, but the slope is unit. Again it indicates that with the rise in income, expenditure would also rise.

Now we shall interpret the graphical findings of the Hindu community.

Case I :

In the expenditure range Rs.100-150, except two observations, all are on the line indicating that, couple with unit slope that there is some deviations from the logical foundation of the theory.

Case II :

In the expenditure range Rs.150-Rs.200, although two observations lie away from the line but not too far away. But it has a slope which is higher than unity. Hence, the same interpretation could be forwarded.

Case III :

Now for the expenditure range Rs.200-250 two observations fall outside the line and four observations are just on the line and it has also

unit slope. Therefore, it has basically supported the theory.

Case IV :

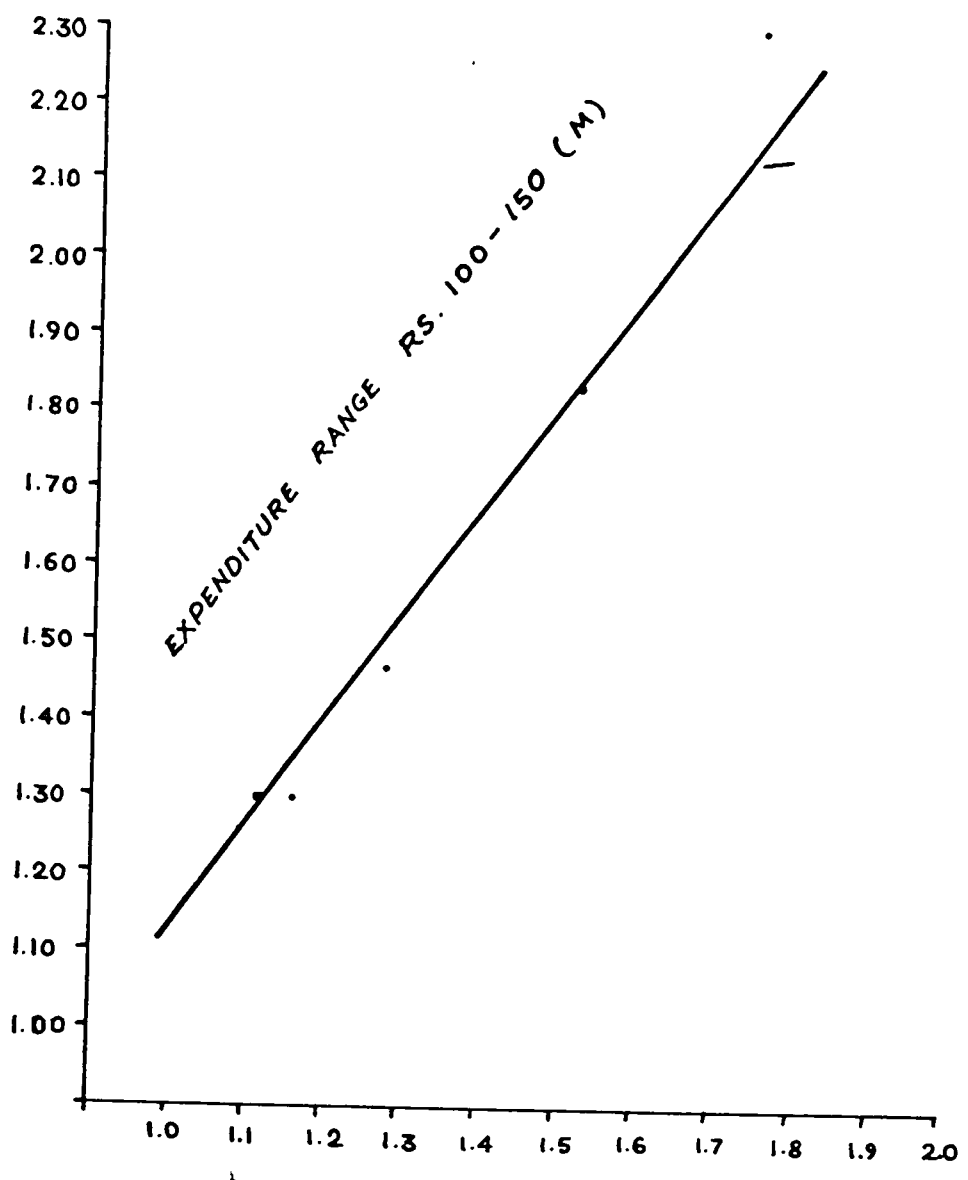
So far the expenditure range Rs.250-Rs.300, is concerned, we found that four observations are quite outside the range of the line; whereas two are just on the line. Also, we see that the slope is higher than unit.

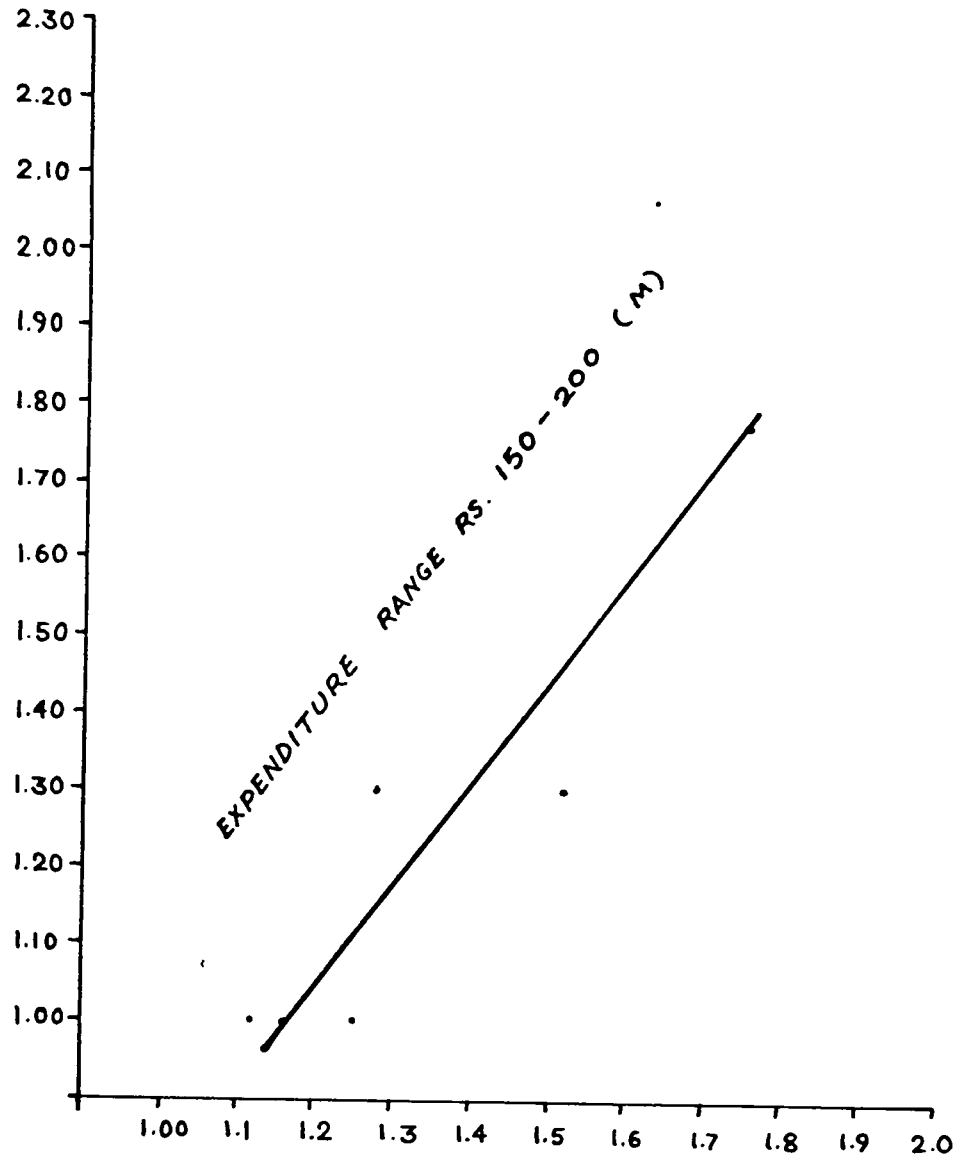
Case V :

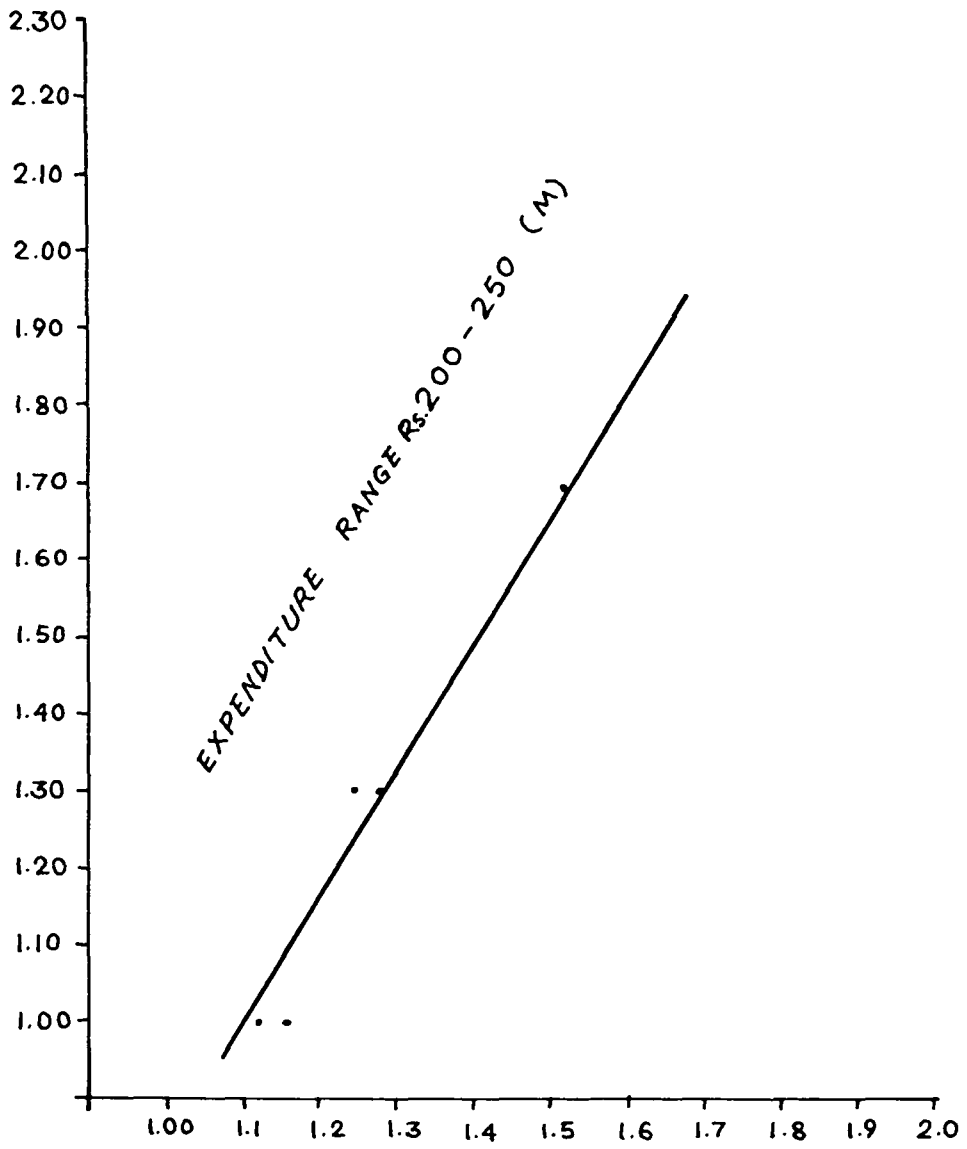
For the expenditure range Rs.300-350, only one observation is quite far away from the line. Also the slope is slightly higher than unity.

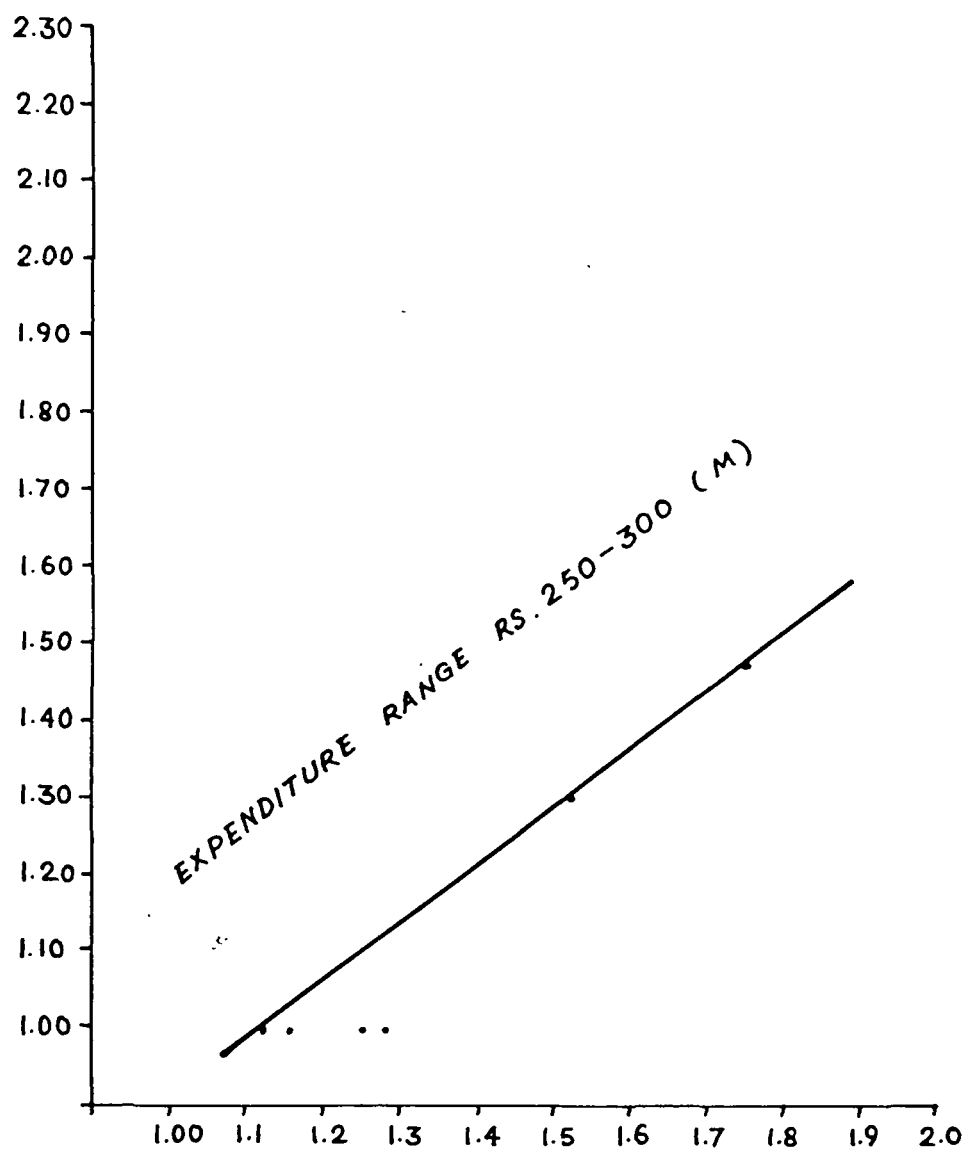
We might conclude that probabilistic interpretation of the assumed different consumption habit of the Hindu and Muslim did not exist. Therefore, we might have to look for the avowed differences elsewhere. After all, economic forces are mostly social forces strengthened by other institutions. The religion might play a very vital role in political and social institutions but in economic institutions its role is disguised if not remote.

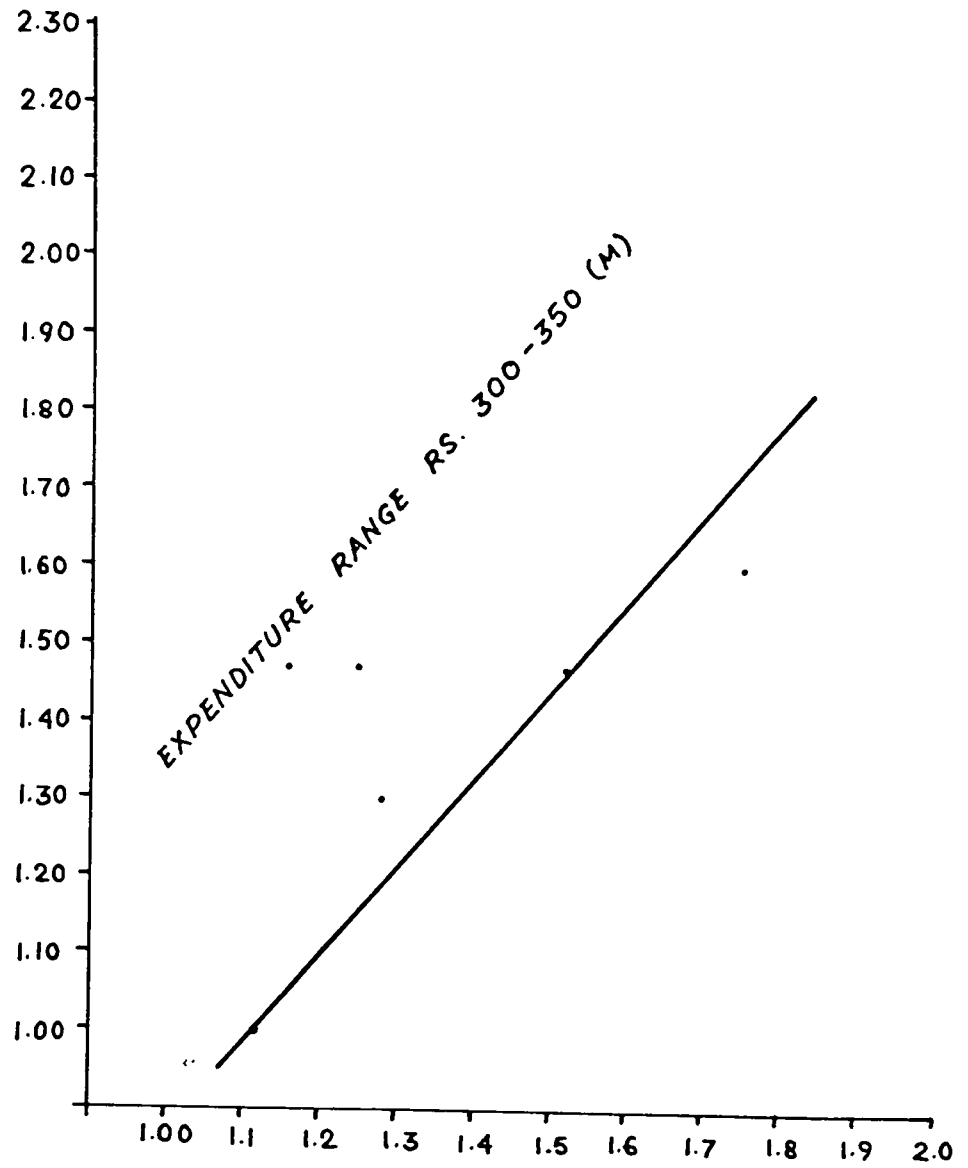
Therefore, in our humble attempt we tried to look at scientifically only an instance of non-difference rather than difference. But what we have put forward in this essay, the writings of different internationally known authorities have still some bearings provided. We would invest more time, study also other institutions together with religious institutions before we could give a final conclusions. In future, the author would say to conduct similar studies to evaluate religious factors in economic development.

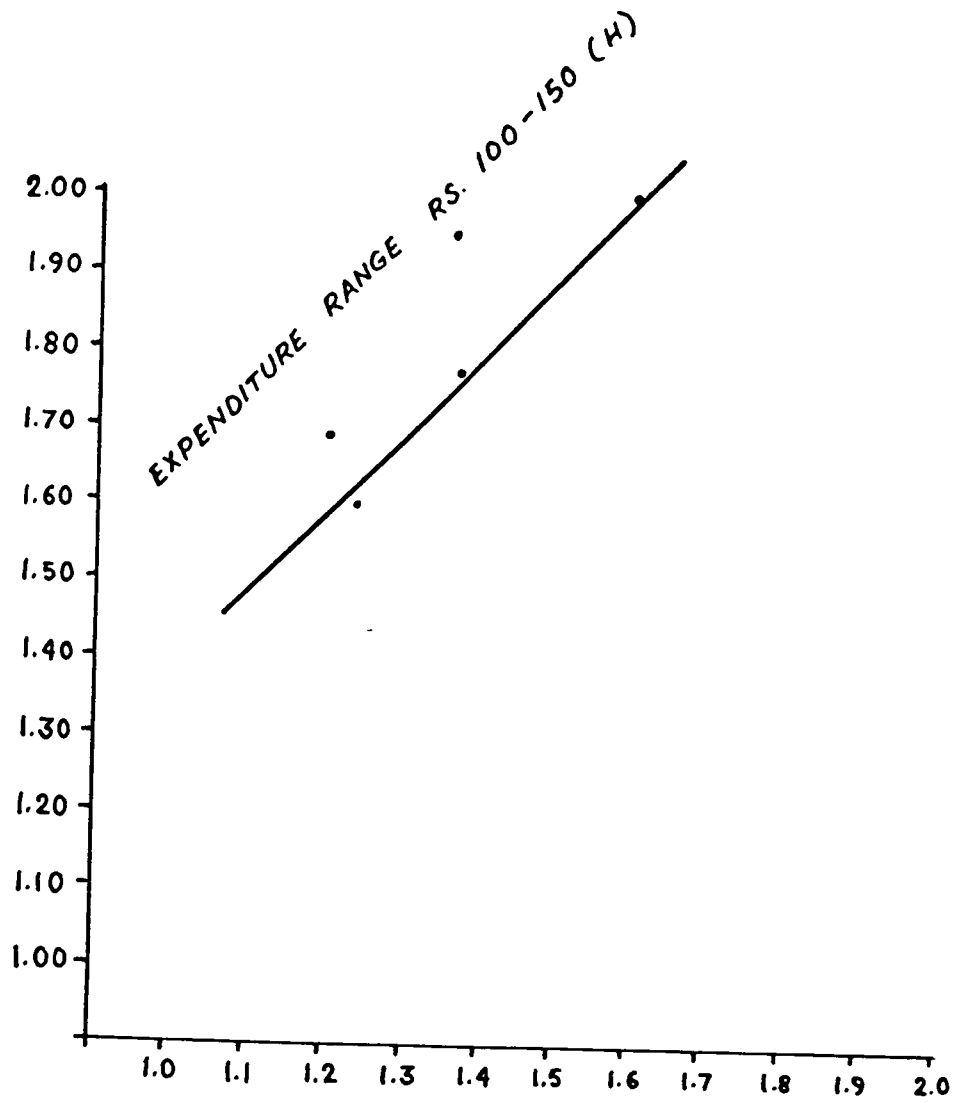


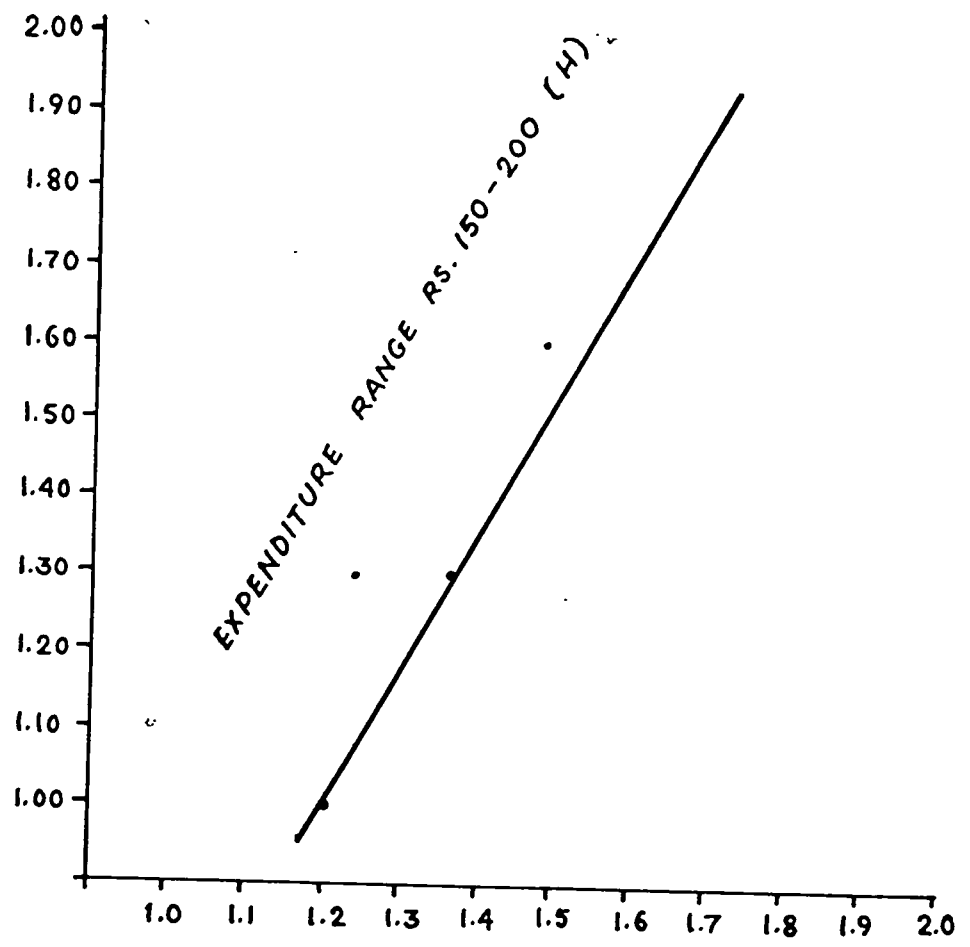


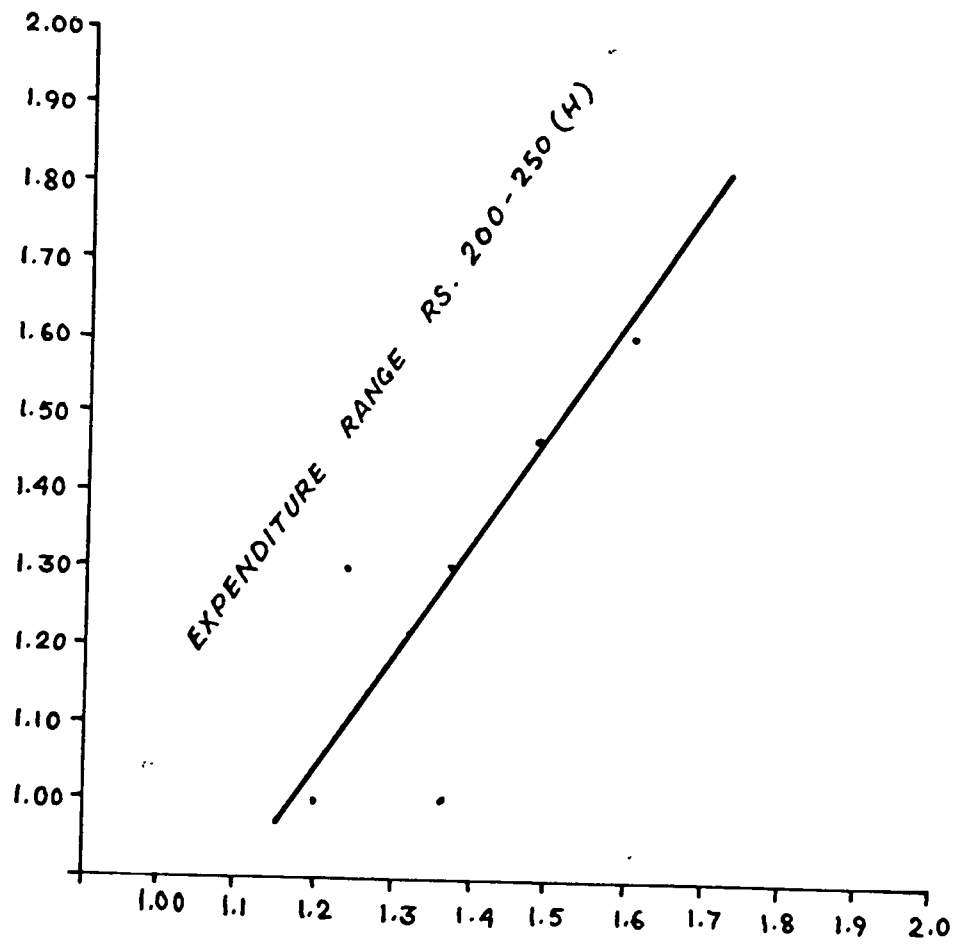


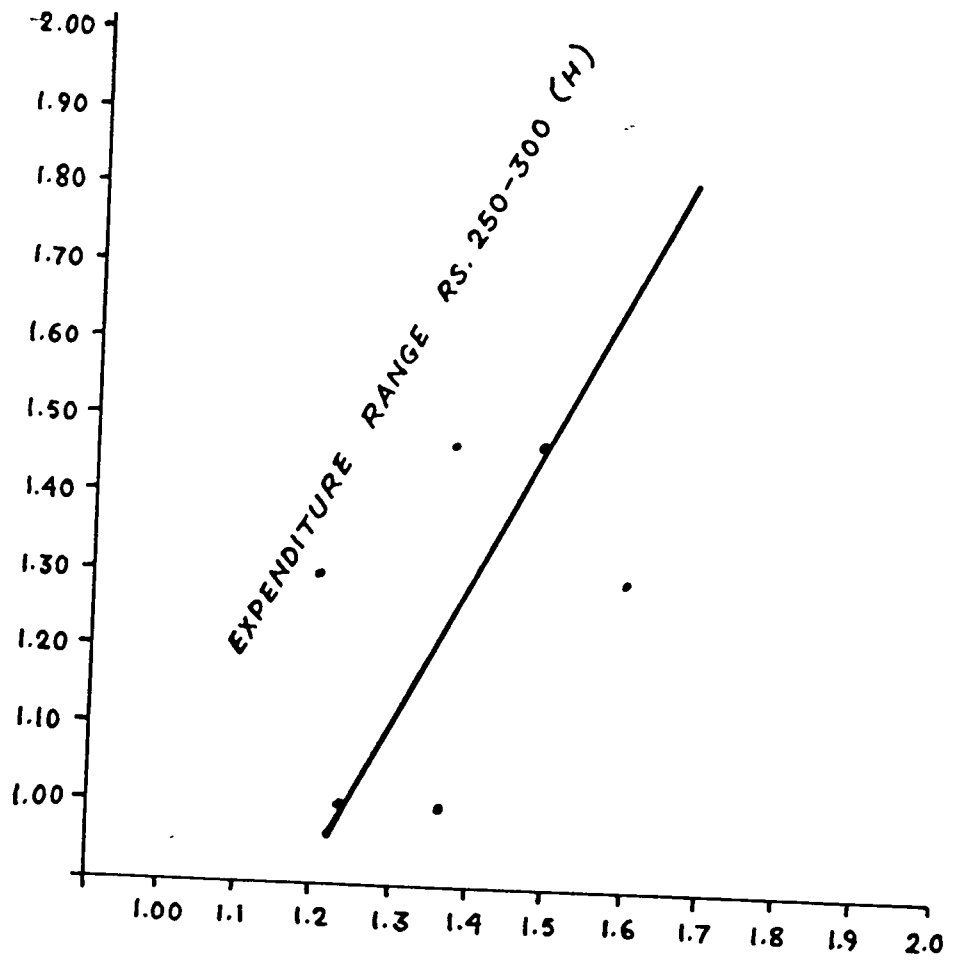


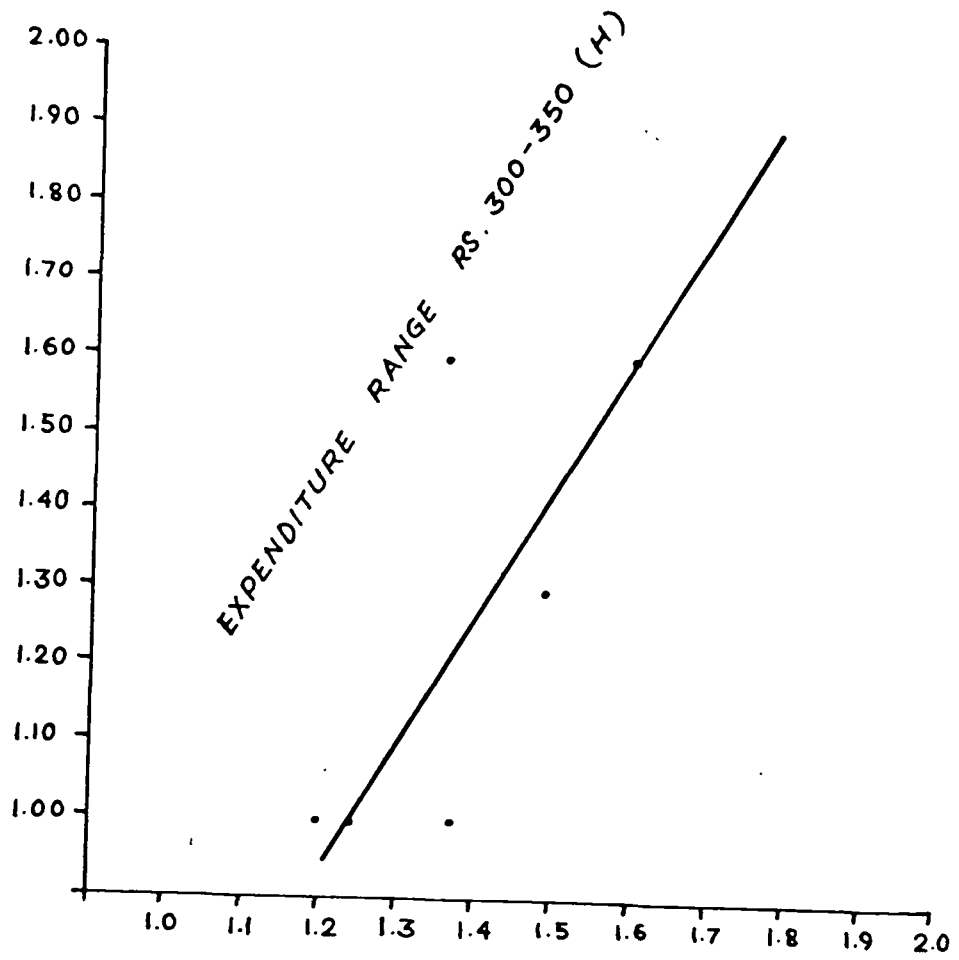












4.4 Other Empirical Findings

Now coming back to other indicators of economic development besides, income, are literacy at different stages, land holdings and family size. In order to make an empirical analysis using any probability model was not found feasible. Therefore, we have confined ourselves to certain important secular criteria like level of literacy, economic interdependence and would change the attitude of the people regarding faith. The change may also be influenced by super-imposition or diffusion of culture by association with people of other faiths and the inevitable radios and TVs. Upon analysing data we found that literacy among the 525 Hindus spread over 112 households, 94% of them are literates. When we broke up the literate population into different levels of education we found that 13%, 22%, 31% and 32% of them are having post-graduate, graduate, post-matric and school level education respectively.

While the number of Muslim population is nearly the same as that of Hindus, i.e. 519, but in their case the percentage of literacy is 29%. The attainment of level of education among the 152 literates out of 519 total Muslim population in the sample are 13%, 7%, 10% in school level, post-matric and graduate level respectively. We have not analysed the data of the 8 households belonging to different faiths.

We have not taken the liberty to toss a hypothesis that Muslims are educationally less fortunate than their Hindu brothers. Although, the limited information that are gathered proved no alternative.

Now we are analysing the landed property and income enjoyed by the two communities. If education does not bring money, surely no one would deny that money brings money. So far land holding is concerned,

there is no disparity among the Hindus and Muslims. About 85% Hindu households and 91% Muslim households possess less than one acre of land. In order to find a clear picture of the landownership we have made classifications of land holding sizes but most of the cells are empty. Only 9 Hindu households and 3 Muslim households possessed 5 acres or more land. It may be so that the urbanites did not have the means to hold land for other purposes other than residences and business.

While coming to the question of studying the income disparity we may have to take note of the natural inhibitiveness of the respondents to disclose the true income of the family. Also the petty traders cannot say with certainty what actually they earned in a month. The farmers do not have the knowledge of book-keeping and they do not consider the food they consume as a part of income. Therefore, one has to assess the income situation with cautious optimalisticacy. Of these 120 households claimed to earn their income from services; 45 households had business and other 10 households made their living on agriculture. Where we see the income status of the Hindus and Muslims separately, we find that 86% of the Hindu households belonged to an income group ranging from Rs. 1000 to Rs. 5000 per month. While 59% of the Muslim households belong to the above income bracket. Since there were very few households with monthly income higher than Rs.5500, therefore, we excluded them for analysing according to faith. There were altogether 53 households with income less than Rs. 1000 per month, of this 39 households belonging to Muslim community; and 14 households belonging to Hindus. Here, the picture is again obvious that the Muslims fared less in earning capacity compared to the Hindus.

We have analysed the data on consumption on certain food items which we considered to be more important; these are meat, fish, egg and vegetables. We have taken the data separately for Hindus and Muslims according to the category of their income and the respective expenditure bracket. We found that there were out of 90 families in the income group less than Rs.500/- per month, only 9 Hindu families reported to have consumed these items, the rest were Muslims families. In income bracket between Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000 there were altogether 93 families, again only 25 Hindu families out of 93 consumed these items. We have likewise analysed the data upto income Rs. 5000/- and more per month, we found that more Hindu families consuming meat, fish, egg and vegetables than the Muslim counterpart. Thus as soon as income rises, the consumption expenditure on these items become more prominent than that of the muslim families.

It may be a very strong argument to put forth that the muslims are savings more when income rises because we found that only a very few families belonging to muslim faith have such a high income. For example, within the income bracket Rs. 1500 to Rs. 4500, there are only 30 muslim families, whereas within the same income range there are 74 Hindu families. Therefore, it is natural that the number of Muslim families reporting to have spent on meat, fish, egg and vegetables will be smaller comparatively to the Hindus.

When it comes to the question of amount of expenditure on these items, we have found that for the income category of Rs. 500, about Rs. 100 to Rs. 150 were spent on these food items; whereas in the income bracket Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000, they spent as much as Rs. 300 to Rs. 350

on these items. As income rises, expenditure on these items also rises upto Rs. 400 and above for the income bracket Rs. 5500 to Rs. 6000. But in this income range there is only two Muslim families.

Now we shall come to the next question - orthodoxy. About 70% of the Hindu families visit the house of God at least once in a week. In case of the Muslim, about 70% visit the house of God in every day.

About the question of daily prayer, 37.5% of the Hindu families, at least one member of the family prays one time in a day. 38.4% twice in a day. Whereas in case of the Muslims, 25.3% pray one time a day, 20.5% pray twice in a day, 10.8% thrice in a day, and 50.5% pray five times in a day.

In this respect, Muslims appear to be keeping their prayers regularly compared to the Hindus. We have also enquired about the belief of supernatural power and sorcery. However, when we have to collect data, we did not contact every member of the household, only the head of the family. We consider that only the view of the head of the family was sufficient. We found that 80.4% of the Hindu heads of the family believed in supernatural power, whereas 100% heads of the muslim family believed in supernatural power. This may be interpreted as our Islam brothers are more fatalistic than the Hindus.

Adverse to religious orthodoxy is the consumption of alcoholic drinks and other addiction like tobacco. Here also, we have asked the head of the family. Only 8.03% persons take alcohol occasionally in case of the Hindus, and 7.34% Muslim heads of family consumed alochol. Surprisingly, no Hindu heads of family reported to take tobacco and only two heads of Muslim families did so; which, however, the scholar could

not be convinced.

Now we come to political affiliations of the two communities in order to understand whether they are alien with any national secular party or regional secular party or some communal parties such as Muslim League, BJP, United Minority Front, etc. In this case also we did not ask every adult member of the family visited but we asked only the head of the family. So we found that 7.1% Hindus, 10.5% Muslims head of the families have affiliation as primary member of the Congress(I). None of the Hindu family except one has reported that he has the affiliation of the Congress(S). Whereas, 4% of the heads of the Muslim family have affiliation with Congress(S). No Muslim head of family belong to CPI faith, whereas 10.7% of the Hindu heads of family belong to CPI and other dominant political parties in which both the communities have affiliations - 13.4% Hindu families and 7.4% Muslim families belong to AGP. They have not reported to have any affiliation to any other political parties. It appears from this, there is some kind of common ideology among the Hindu and the Muslims so far as political parties are concerned.

Now we have come to the communications. Since communication is the main source of diffusion of religious orthodoxy and the means of understanding the modern trend in the society which help them to break away from rigid alienation from his respective community. In this respect, we have considered TV, Radio, Cinema, Theatre, Newspapers, etc. as a medium of communication to familiarize with the life and philosophy of other people. We found that 83 Hindu families reported to have television and 106 of them have radio and about 100 of them reported to go to cinema occasionally. Of this 112 Hindu families visited, 102 of

them are regular subscriber of Newspapers, of the 95 Muslim families only 41 reported to have TV; 56 reported to have radio, 65 of them go occasionally to cinema and only 42 families subscribed for newspapers. Thus, it appears that if we take alone newspapers which is the means of communication for the intellectuals only the Hindus fared better than the Muslims. 91% of the Hindus, 44% of the Muslims have the newspapers which indicate that the intellectual trend among the Hindus is more positive than that of the Muslims.

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CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

We have taken a topic with mixed sentiments, emotional upsurge and at the same time with down toward materialistic affairs. Even Max Weber, Tawney, Rodinson, Vikas Misra and others who are both eminent sociologists and philosophers could not convince each other. Each group of thinkers with their life long jealous pursuits in understanding the diametrically opposite view which have among the religious, yet which have moulded our civilization and given a thrust to achieve desired economic development.

As the little of our study indicates, we have with all earnestness made an attempt to find and to investigate whether religion plays a specific role in economic prosperity. Every religion has its own specific role in the socio-economic atmosphere of a society. It can lead to progress or to decay, depending upon the principal doctrines of it. According to Max Weber, no religion is favourable to economic development except the christianity; and more particularly the Protestant Christianity.

For an empirical study into the role of faith as contributory to economic prosperity, the author selected two urban setting of Nowgong town of Assam, where inhabitants are mostly Hindus and Muslims. We are interested to study this topic because of the fact that religion dominates most of the economic activities of the people both in the developed countries and underdeveloped countries. The study covers 215 households from the Fauzdaripatty and Aminpatty area in Nowgong town.

Still ready-made data for such study are not available, the author

had prepared a questionnaire consisting of 12 questions in all. The author have personally visited all the households, met the head of the family, explained him/her the purpose of our study and collected the necessary information. Since our study has covered all the organised religions of our region, though scanned within a small fringe of urban middle class people of the largest town of Assam in terms of population (next only to Guwahati town), now we come to the conclusions that :

Majority of the people have faith on religion and God, though they are educated) and elite. But we found from our analysis that Muslims are more orthodox than the Hindus. The fatalistic ideology of the Muslims with other external influences stand as an obstacle on the economic development.

The middle class people spend a portion of their income on consumption and communication such as on TV, Radio, Newspapers, Magazines, etc. As regard consumption expenditure pattern, there is no significant difference between the two communities. The low income group spend a large portion of their income, in some cases the whole of their income on consumption. And as income rises, consumption expenditure also rises. But the earning capacity in case of Muslim is less than that of the Hindus, we have found that in case of landed property the disparity between the Hindus and the Muslims is insignificant.

As people have deep faith on the power of God and religion, therefore, we came to the conclusion that they spend a huge amount on religious customs, institutions, etc.

Our time is limited, data are inadequate and the space in which we operate is only a tiny dot of the universe. Yet we have endeavour

to understand some implications of religions upon our growth of economic prosperity, which is itself a very microscopic study of a macroscopic world of spirit and matter. Our judgement may be biased. Often we looked at by nature as my faith is superior my religion is universal and others not, we are liked to be reminded again of the words of Spinoza who says among other things, "arrogance is glory". Sometimes we feel that we are only Indians, we do not have religion because we cannot have religion; for the fact that multiplicity of Hinduism, accomodation of Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Sikhism and the Buddhism which germinated in the fertility of Hinduism.

To live together means to share and to share means to give and take, as a result we are no more truely religious people, only religion may be our ignorance.

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**APPENDIX
STATISTICAL DATA**

Income

Expenditure (in Rs.)	Income (in Rs.)	500-1000	1000-1500	1500-2000	2000-2500	2500-3000	3000-3500
100-150 \bar{X}_1		200 2.30	70 1.84	30 1.47	20 1.30	30 1.47	20 1.30
150-200 \bar{X}_2		60 1.77	20 1.30	10 1.00	10 1.00	20 1.30	10 1.00
200-250 \bar{X}_3		40 1.60	50 1.69	20 1.30	10 1.00	20 1.30	20 1.30
250-300 \bar{X}_4		30 1.47	20 1.30	10 1.00	10 1.00	10 1.00	10 1.00
300-350 \bar{X}_5		40 1.60	30 1.47	30 1.47	30 1.47	20 1.30	10 1.00
Av.		1.75	1.52	1.25	1.16	1.28	1.12

Expenditure Muslim

Income

Expenditure (in Rs.)	Income (in Rs.)	500-1000	1000-1500	1500-2000	2000-2500	2500-3000	3000-3500
100-150 \bar{X}_1		40 1.60	60 1.77	50 1.69	40 1.60	90 1.95	100 2.00
150-200 \bar{X}_2		20 1.30	20 1.30	10 1.00	40 1.60	20 1.30	30 1.47
200-250 \bar{X}_3		20 1.30	20 1.30	10 1.00	30 1.47	10 1.00	40 1.60
250-300 \bar{X}_4		10 1.00	30 1.47	20 1.30	30 1.47	10 1.00	20 1.30
300-350 \bar{X}_5		10 1.00	10 1.00	10 1.00	20 1.30	40 1.60	40 1.60
Av.		1.24,	1.37	1.20	1.49	1.36	1.60

Expenditure Hindu

Religious composition of population

Religion	Hindu	Muslim	Jain	Sikh	Maitei
No. of household	112	95	2	5	1
Male	268	274	6	16	4
Female	257	245	4	10	4
Total	525	519	10	26	8

Religion and Consumption (Narcotic/Alcohol)

Religion	Alcohol	Tobacco	Others	Total
Hindu	9		1	10
Muslim	7	2	6	15
Others	1		1	2
Total	17	2	8	27

Religion and Political Affiliations

Religion	Political Parties						
	C(I)	C(S)	CPI	AGP	Lok Dal	Indepen- dent	Socialist
Hindu	8	1	12	15	1		1
Muslim	10	4		7		2	
Others				1		1	
Others	18	5	12	23	1	3	1

Religion	Visit to House of God	None
Hindu	79	33
Muslim	68	27
Others	6	2

Religion	Belief in Supernatural power	Sorcery, Magic etc.	None
Hindu	90	2	20
Muslim	94		1
Others	5		3

Religion and Communications

Communication	No. of households				
	Hindu	Islam	Jain	Sikh	Meitei
TV	83	41	2	5	11
Radio	106	56	2	4	x
Cinema	100	65	1	5	x
Theater	75	25	x	2	x
Newspaper, Magazines, etc.	102	42	2	4	1

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