Research Paper History

# Socio-Economic and Demographic Profile of Bengali Community in the Dehing Patkai Region (A case study of Margherita Town)

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**ABSTRACT**

This article presents a case study of Margherita town, a historical and first industrial town in Tinsukia District, Assam, India. The article clearly reflects the shadows of Migration and how advent of industrialization promotes and recognizes this place of historical importance with the rest of the world. The article also depicts the socio-economic and demographic profile of Bengali community in the Dehing Patkai Region.

**KEYWORDS** Migration, industrialization, socio-economic, demographic etc.

**Introduction:**

The long 600 years reign of Ahom ended up in 1826 with signing of the famous **Yandaboo Treaty** and Assam passed into the hands of British. Following the treaty, the Burmese (Maan) invaders who destabilized the Ahom kingdom were chased out by the British and brought peace in Assam.

The days of the **Treaty of Yandaboo (1826),** when Assam witnessed the devastations caused due to this merciless killings in thousands by the Burmese (Maan) practically there was acute labour shortage of working in Tea gardens. On the other side after the great earthquake of 1834 Bihar's Chhotanagpur, Santhal Pargana, Orissa's Sambalpur region and some regions of the then Madhya Pradesh were very badly hit by famine, which led the poor cultivators in thousands to migrate into Assam as tea garden labour. These labourers are classified in to Tribes and Non-Tribes. The Mundas, the Santhals, the Oraons , the Gonds, the Koyas, the Kalanandis, the Bhumijs belong to Tribes and the rest like the Kurmi, the Tantis, the Koiris, the Shahus, the Panikas, the Keots etc. are non-tribes.

Soon the British discovered commercial opportunities in Assam (the present entire N.E. Region). The tea, timber, coal and later oil made Assam a lucrative place for them. To work in these industries, they needed man power, which they brought from outside as locals were too lazy to work in those grueling conditions. So came Carias, Mundas and the Oraons of the Adivasi stock to work in Tea gardens and became Tea- Tribes. Bengalis came to work in the clerical grade. Marowaris came to do business and the Biharis to do manual work. Those were the days when Assam was synonymous with the dreaded diseases of Malaria. Many died and many fled while many more persisted doggedly. Initially, Bengalis were very reluctant to come to Assam because of Malaria. Many would flee within a few days of arriving Assam. But slowly they began to stay put and the British made Bengali the state language. They gruelled in those unfavouring conditions. They slogged in the oil fields of Digboi and in Dibrugarh; they did pioneering work in Berry White Medical School which later became Assam Medical College. Many had settled in Assam even before partition. It was hard for any one not to be charmed by Assam, in spite of all these drawbacks. Even before 1947, Bengali neighbourhoods had sprung up in major towns of the state. Further with partition of the country in 1947, many Hindu Bengalis from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) were displaced more particularly due to communal riot and came to settle down in parts of Assam. The upper Assam being the most prominent industrial belt, a large chunk of displaced people settled down in these areas along with other parts of the state, forming a part of the colourful cultural ethos of the region.

**Bengali Culture- Not Uniform:**

Though Bengalis are spread all over the world, their concentrations are largely to be found in the state of **West Bengal** and **Tripura** in India and **Bangladesh.** Another sizeable proportion of Bengali community is also to be found in the **Barak Valley district of Assam**; where both Hindus and Muslims live together with their respective cultural practices. In Brahmaputra Valley, Bengalis are unevenly distributed; while in some pocket areas they are found in mass. So far as the cultural practices of Bengali Community are concerned, some distinctive features are noticed. For example, the Bengalis of West Bengal are mostly Hindus and have their own cultural practices as distinct from those of Bangladesh. Similarly, the cultural practices of the Hindus Bengalis living in Brahmaputra and Barak Valley districts of Assam (who are mostly displaced from East Bengal) have some uniformity with those of West Bengal-though not akin. Still some distinctions between the cultural practices of the Hindu Bengalis of Barak and Brahmaputra valleys of Assam do not go unnoticed. In fact, the Bengalis of Brahmaputra Valley are greatly influenced by the local culture – the tendency to which has become more pronounced during the recent years and following an increasing trend with the passage of time. There are most of Bengali families sending their children to Assamese Medium Schools, there are many Bengali families who want their children teach '**Bihu Dance'**, "**Satriya Dance**". Still there are others who use Assamese "**gamucha**", wear Assamese '**Mekhela**' and even greet each other saying "**Happy Bihu**". Further more, felicitation in meetings with Assamese gamucha has become a common phenomenon in most of the meetings even in Bengali prone areas of Assam. Thus, a cultural transition among the Bengalis of Brahmaputra Valley of Assam is in offing.

**Dehing Patkai: A Brief Introduction:**

The 'Dehing Patkai' encompasses a large area covering the district of Tinsukia and Dibrigarh in Assam and part of Arunachal Pradesh (the district of Tirap, Changlang and Lower Dehang Valley). The whole tract of land covering the two bamks of fiver Buridehing is the Dehing Patkai region. On being bifurcated, one branch of river Diyung viz. "Noa Dehing"; dips down into the great Brahmaputra; thereby creating a vast land mass- the river island yet to be traced officially. Though the whole belt of the Dehing Patkai has great significance from various counts, its discovery is of recent origin. The history of Assam and that of World War II are very closely related to this area.

In the area of Dehing Patkai, live a large number of ethnic tribal socio-culturally and physically akin to South East Asia besides non-tribal from different parts of the country. Among the tribals, the important ones are the Singphos, Tangsas, Neotes, Wanchos, Khamtis, Tai-Phakes, Duanias, Kacharis, other

Bodos, Sema, Nagas, Deoris and non- tribals such as Ahoms, Mattaks, Morans, extra garden labourers, Nepalis and so on.

The Dehing Patkai area comes under the country's richest "**North East Bio-geographic Zone**" and "Brahmaputra Valley Biotic province." It is a part of the World's bio-diversity hotspot. The whole region is the homeland of several hundred species of plants, animals, birds and orchids; which include several rare and unique varieties too. The Govt. of Assam by a notification dated 19th June, 2004 declared creation of DEHING PATKAI WILD LIFE SANCTUARY covering a part of the greater Dehing Patkai region falling within the territory of Assam under the Digboi and Dibrugarh forest divisions. The whole area of Dehing Patkai is fabricated with a large number of ethnic tribes. They mostly belong to Mongolian blood and are socio-culturally related to the South East Asian countries like Thailand and Cambodia including Myanmar. In addition to these ethnic tribes of Mongolian origin, tea tribes and various non-tribal communities live in this vast area from time immemorial with their respective socio-cultural practices.

**Scope and Methodology:**
The present study is conducted by taking the Bengali inhabitants of Margherita Town under the District of Tinsukia in Assam as its universe. Margherita, the Head Quarter of North Eastern Coalfields, is situated in Dibrugarh (now Tinsukia) district of Assam at a distance of 1350kms North-east of Calcutta and it is sub-divided into four wards i.e. Ward no. I, Ward no. II, Ward no. III, Ward no. IV.

With a population of 3, 17,622 according to 2001 census, Margherita is small but vibrant town. Geographically Margherita is located in the north-eastern end of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam in the district of Tinsukia Situated on the banks of the river Buridehing at the foot of the Patkai range; the town has a beautiful natural surrounding.

Margherita owes its rise primarily to coal mining, tea plantation and plywood manufacturing that came up in and around the area during the British Rule. Indeed, prior to the coming of the imperial British, Buridehing valley was almost a dark region. Even during the period of powerful Ahom rule, this region was practically a no-man's land. Bordered by the Patkai range and the mighty Brahmaputra, this vast region, crises-crossed by hilly streams and rivulets, was an ideal abode for wild elephants, predatory animals and other fauna. In those days habitation was almost nil. Even during Ahom rule, the Buridehing valley was almost outside their sphere of influence. They treated this valley as the KALA PANI or dark region. The Ahom rulers used to banish the condemned man in to this valley to die out a miserable death from starvation, disease or in the hands of predators. Past records say that the Ahom kings occasionally came to the firings of this vast forest region to participate in elephant catching or to enjoy the royal game of wild bird killing with trained hawks.

Following the discovery of coal and oil deposits in the area, Margherita was developed in to a commercial centre by the British owned Assam Railway and Trading Company Ltd towards the end of the 19th century. Prior to that the whole area was known as Makum. When the Makum area was connected by rail with Dibrugarh in 1884, a railway station was named MARGARETA or MARGHERITA from which the present town Margherita acquired its name. The name of 'Margherita' was derived from the celebrated British doctor John Berry White's lovely and loveable daughter 'Margaret' who died in most tragic circumstances in the wilds of this area in the late seventies of 19th century. One T. Kenny's theory that Margherita was named after Margaret, the queen of Italy is hardly accepted. Besides coal mining, Margherita soon became a centre of tea plantation and plywood manufacturing too, all of which were owned and controlled by the British. All these activities required workers for which people were brought in mostly from out side the state though some were locally inducted more people came in gradually in search of fortune and started setting down here. Around the middle of the 20th century, some medium and small scale industrial units also started coming up opening further opportunities of employment and earning and in turn inducting another wave of immigration.

Margherita is a small industrial town with population of about 40,000 as on 31st 2004. At present the town has 5076 households (2009) covered by a land area of 16,200 square kilometers. It is the Sub-divisional headquarters of Margherita and is inhabited by diverse groups of population from various communities and religions including indigenous tribes. The township is beset by various large and medium industrial undertakings of Coal, Tea, and Plywood in addition to a good number of micro and small enterprises. The historic Stillwell road which connects India's North East through Myanmar via China and starts from Ledo (Lekhapani) in Assam is about 20 km from here.

For the purpose of the study, all Bengali households under each of the four wards of the town are identified from the electoral roll of 2009. On being identified, 10% of the Bengali households under each of the wards are randomly taken for investigation. Thus, there emerged 146 households for investigation. This is shown in **Table 1.**

**Table 1**
**Ward wise breakup of the total households, total Bengali households in the Margherita Town and number of sample Bengali Households.**

| WARD | TOTAL HOUSEHOLD (NO.) | TOTAL BENGALI HOUSEHOLDS (NO.) | SAMPLE HOUSEHOLD (NOS.) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ward-I | 724 | 56 (7.73) | 6 |
| Ward-II | 1052 | 502 (47.71) | 50 |
| Ward-III | 1051 | 298 (28.35) | 30 |
| Ward-IV | 2249 | 604 (26.86) | 60 |
| Total | 5076 (100.00 ) | 1460 (28.76) | 146 |

**N.B.: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of total (5076) households**
**Source: Compiled from Margherita Town Committee electoral roll 2009.**

Data were collected by direct personal interview with head of each of the households by a structured questionnaire prepared for the purpose. The sample includes rich-poor, educated – uneducated, Government Service Holders, Private Service holders, daily wage earners, petty businessman and traders, shopkeepers and the like to cover up cross-section of the community.

**Objectives of the Study:**
- To depict a brief but vivid picture of the socio-economic and demographic profile of the Bengali community residing in the township area of Margherita.
- To develop an opinion poll about reopening of the Stilwell Road.

**Gender Category:**
**Table 2** shows that in all the 146 households surveyed, the total member of members is 787; while out of these, 406 (51.59%) are female as against 351 (48.41%) male. Thus, Bengali female out numbered their male counter part in the township area of Margherita.

**Table 2**
**Gender wise Breakup of the sample population**

| Ward | Male (nos.) | Female (nos.) | Total (nos.) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ward I | 30 (40.54) | 44 (59.46) | 74 (100.00) |
| Ward II | 121 (49.59) | 123 (50.41) | 244 (100.00) |
| Ward III | 70 (46.05) | 82 (53.95) | 152 (100.00) |
| Ward IV | 160 (50.4%) | 157 (49.53) | 317 (100.00) |
| Total | 381 (48.41) | 406 (51.59) | 787 (100) |

**Source: Field survey.**
**N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of the raw totals.**

It can further be seen from table 2 that in all the wards, with the exception of **Ward No. IV**, female members of Bengali households outnumbered their male counterpart

**Family Size:**
It can be seen from previous table (**Table 2**) that there are in all 787 members in 146 sample houses. It means that the average size of a Bengali family in Margherita township area is of 5.39 members.

**Table 3**
**Size of family wise breakup of the sample households**

| Size of family (no. of members | Ward I (no. of houses) | Ward II (no. of houses) | Ward III (no. of houses) | Ward IV (no. of houses) | Total (no.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Single | -- | -- | -- | 3 | 3 (2.05) |
| 2—4 | 1 | 2 | 18 | 25 | 64 (43.84) |
| 5—7 | 3 | 24 | 9 | 22 | 58 (39.73) |
| 8—10 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 17 (11.64) |
| 11 & above | -- | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 (2.74) |
| Total | 6 | 50 | 3 | 60 | 146 (100.00) |

**Source: Field Survey.**

**N.B.: Figures is the parentheses indicate percentage of column total.**

**Table 3** denotes that while 43.84% sample households have families with 2—4 members, the commonly found size of a Bengali family in Margherita township area is of 2—7 members; constituting as many as 83.57% of the total sample households.

**Educational Background of Sample Population:**
Educational background wise breakup of the 787 sample population as presented in **Table 4** reveals that out of the total sample population of 787 which includes the infants who are yet to attend any school and the students who are studying in schools and colleges at various levels, 43.45% are tied up within the educational level.

**Table 4**
**Level of Education wise breakup of the sample Bengali Population (including students) in Margherita township area.**

| Level of Education | WardI (no.) | Ward II (no.) | WardIII (no.) | Ward IV (no.) | Total (No.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Illiterate | 12 (16.22) | 15 (6.15) | 4 (2.63) | 3 (0.95) | 34 (4.32) |
| L.P. – M.E. Level | 21 (28.38) | 39 (15.98) | 32 (21.05) | 61 (19.24) | 153 (19.44) |
| ME – Undermatric | 16 (21.62) | 67 (27.46) | 39 (25.66) | 67 (21.14) | 189 (24.01) |
| Undermatric – HS Level | 14 (18.92) | 50 (20.49) | 26 (17.11) | 55 (17.35) | 145 (18.42) |
| HS Level – Undergraduate | 6 (8.11) | 58 (23.77) | 28 (18.42) | 73 (23.03) | 165 (20.97) |
| Graduate | 3 (4.05) | 13 (5.33) | 20 (13.15) | 43 (13.56) | 79 (10.03) |
| Technical Degree / Diploma | 2 (2.70) | 1 (0.41) | 2 (1.32) | 11(3.47) | 16 (2.03) |
| Post Graduate & above | -- | -- | 1 (0.66) | 4(1.26) | 6 (0.76) |
| Total | 74 (100.00) | 244 (100.00) | 152 (100.00) | 317 (100.00) | 787 (100.00) |

**Source: Field Survey**
**N.B.: Figure is the parentheses indicate percentage of column totals.**

Of L.P. – Undermatric; while 31.00% of the sample populations are with level of education ranging from H.S level to graduate. The technical Degree / Diploma holders constitute only 2.03% of the sample population as against 0.76% of those having post graduate and about level of education.

**Level of Education of Sample Family Heads:**
To get a clearer picture about the educational status of the Bengali Community living in Margherita town, study about the level of education of the head of each of the 164 sample families made and presented in **Table 5.**

**Table 5**
**Family head's level of education wise breaks up of the sample households.**

| Level of Education | Ward I (no.) | Ward II (no.) | Ward III (no.) | Ward IV (no.) | Total (No.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Illiterate | -- | 12 (24.00) | 4 (13.73) | 3 (5.00) | 19 (13.01) |
| L.P. – M.E. Level | 1(16.67) | 12 (24.00) | 6 (20.00) | 11 (18.33) | 30 (20.55) |
| ME – Undermatric | -- | 23 (46.00) | 7 (23.33) | 10 (16.67) | 40 (27.40) |
| Undermatric – HS Level | 1(16.67) | 1(2.00) | 7 (23.33) | 12 (20.00) | 21 (14.38) |
| HS Level – Undergraduate | 1(16.67) | -- | 3 (10.00) | 6 (10.00) | 10 (6.85) |
| Graduate | 2(33.33) | 2(4.00) | 2 (6.67) | 8 (5.48) | 14 (9.59) |
| Technical Degree / Diploma | -- | -- | -- | 6 (10.00) | 6 (4.11) |
| Post Graduate & above | 1(16.67) | -- | 1 (3.33) | 4 (2.74) | 6 (4.11) |
| Total | 6 (100.00) | 50 (100.00) | 30 (100.00) | 60 (100.00) | 146 (100.00) |

**Source: Field Survey**
**NB: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of the column totals.**

It can be seen from Table 5 that close to 48% of the sample household heads are with very poor level of education ranging from L.P. to less then undermatric; while 13.01% are illiterate. This means that as many as 60.96% of the household heads bear a very poor educational background. The number of graduate household heads is close to 10% of the total households. The technical degree and diploma holders which included doctors, engineers, cost accountant together with other technical diploma holders, constitute only 4.11% of the total sample households and are concentrated only in **Ward No. IV** of the town. Incidentally, the sample household heads with academic achievements of post graduate and above also constitute 4.11% of the sample households.

**Nativity:**
As many as 60.96% of the household heads are Domiciled Natives who migrated to Margherita township area from other places and get permanently settled here. It can further be seen from Table no. 6 that 31.51% of the sample household heads.

**Table 6**
**Nativity Wise Breakup of the Sample Household Heads.**

| Nativity | Ward I (no.) | Ward II (no.) | Ward III (no.) | Ward IV (no.) | Total (No.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| * Natives | 2 (33.33) | 13 (26.00) | 4 (13.33) | 27 (45.00) | 46 (31.51) |
| ** Domiciled natives | 4 (66.67) | 37 (74.00) | 24 (80.00) | 24 (40.00) | 89 (60.96) |
| ***Outsiders | -- | -- | 2 (6.67) | 9 (15.00) | 11 (7.53) |
| Total | 6 (100.00) | 50 (100.00) | 30 (100.00) | 60 (100.00) | 146 (100.00) |

**Source: Field survey.**
**N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of the**

**column totals.**
***Those who or whose ancestors have been in the study area from period prior to India's Independence (i.e. 1947)**
**** Those who or whose ancestors came to the study area after Independence but settled permanently in this area.**
***** Those who do not have any permanency is the study area and may leave any time.**

Are 'Natives' who or whose ancestors have been in the Margherita township area from periods prior to India's Independence. there are 7.53% 'Outside' household heads who do not have any permanency in the town as they have came with jobs in banks, insurance companies or with any business ventures and may be transferred ant time.

**Caste Background:**
As many as 65.07% of the sample households are of General Caste (**Table 7)** other than Brahmin (11.64%). It can further be seen from **Table 7** that there are 16.44% OBC and 5.48% SC categories of households. Further, there is less than 1% household of Bengali Muslim and Christian origin.

**Table 7**
**Caste background wise classification of sample households.**

| Caste/ Religion | Ward I (no.) | Ward II (no.) | Ward III (no.) | Ward IV (no.) | Total (No.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| General | 2 (33.33) | 31 (62.00) | 24 (80.00) | 38 (63.33) | 95 (65.07) |
| Brahmin | 1 (16.67) | 3 ((6.00) | 4 (13.33) | 9 (15.00) | 17 (11.64) |
| OBC | 2 (33.33) | 12 (24.00) | 1 (3.33) | 9 (15.00) | 24 (16.44) |
| SC | 1 (16.67) | 4 (8.00) | 1 (3.33) | 2 (3.33) | 8 (5.48) |
| Muslim | -- | -- | - | 1 (1.67) | 1 (0.68) |
| Christian | -- | -- | -- | 1 (1.67) | 1 (0.68) |
| Total | 6 (100.00) | 50 (100.00) | 30 (100.00) | 60 (100.00) | 146 (100.00) |

**Source: Field survey.**
**NB: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of column totals.**

**Occupational Background:**
The pattern of occupational background of the Bengalis residing in the township area of Margherita as presented in **Table 8** denotes that in all the 146.

**Table 8**
**Occupational background wise break up of the sample Bengalis residing in Margherita township area.**

| Occupation | Ward I (no.) | Ward II (no.) | Ward III (no.) | Ward IV (no.) | Total (No.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agriculture and Allied | - | 2 (2.32) | 2 (4.35) | 17 (15.45) | 21 (8.27) |
| Small Business | 6 (50.00) | 62 (72.09) | 13 (28.26) | 32 (29.09) | 133 (44.49) |
| Service in govt. Dept/ Public Enterprises | 1(8.33) | 5 (5.81) | 12 (26.09) | 16 (14.55) | 34 (13.39) |
| Private Service | 3 (25.00) | 15 (17.44) | 13 (28.26) | 31 (28.18) | 62 (24.41) |
| Rickshaw/ Thela pullers, masion, carpenters | -- | 1(1.16) | -- | 4 (3.64) | 5 (1.97) |
| Professionals and self employed | 2 (16.67) | 1(1.16) | 6 (13.04) | 10 (9.09) | 19 (7.48) |
| Total | 12 (100.00) | 86 (100.00) | 46 (100.00) | 110 (100.00) | 254 (100.00) |

**Source: Field survey**
**NB: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of column totals.**

Sample households there are 254 employed with different occupations. The largest concentration being too small Business (44.49%), followed by Private Service (24.41). Service in Govt. departments and public enterprises like Coal India constitute 13.39% of the Bengali employed persons under the sample. While Agriculture and allied occupation employ 8.27% of employed persons under the sample, 7.48% is the professionals and self-employed.

**Monthly Income:**
The range of monthly income of the sample households as shown in **Table 9** reveals that majority (60.96%) of the sample households are tied up in the Monthly income range of Rs. 5000—20000/- while 47.26% are in the monthly income range of Rs. 5000/-15000/-. The affluent section earning Rs. 40000/- and above per range constitute only 8.90% of the sample households.

**Table 9**
**Breakup of sample households according to their levels of monthly income.**

| Monthly income range (Rs.) | Ward I (no.) | Ward II (no.) | Ward III (no.) | Ward IV (no.) | Total (No.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Below – 5000 | -- | 2 (4.00) | 1 (3.33) | 7 (11.630 | 10 (6.85) |
| 5000 – 10000 | 2 (33.33) | 15 (30.000 | 6 (20.00) | 16 (26.67) | 39 (26.71) |
| 10000 – 15000 | 1 (16.67) | 20 (40.00) | 4 (13.33) | 5 (8.33) | 30 (20.55) |
| 15000 – 20000 | 1 (16.67) | 8 (16.00) | 1 (3.33) | 10 (16.67) | 20 (13.70) |
| 20000 – 25000 | 1 (16.67) | 4 (8.00) | 6 (20.00) | 4 (6.67) | 15 (10.27) |
| 25000 – 30000 | 1 (16.67) | 1 (2.00) | 7 (23.33) | -- | 13 (8.90) |
| 30000 – 35000 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 35000 – 40000 | -- | -- | 1 (3.33) | 5 (8.33) | 6 (4.11) |
| 40000 – Above | -- | --- | 4 (13.33) | 9 (15.00) | 13 (8.90) |
| Total | 6 (100.00) | 50 (100.00) | 30 (100.00) | 60 (100.00) | 146 (100.00) |

**Source: field survey.**
**NB: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of the column totals.**

**Types of Dwelling House:**
Majority (44.52%) of the sample households live in Assam type pacca houses. This is followed by semi-pacca (23.29%) and pacca (RCC) type (16.44%). It should be noted that more than 85% of the households live in their own houses, the rest live either in quarters provided by their employers or in rented houses.

**Table 10**
**Types of dwelling houses used by sample households.**

| Type of house | Ward I (no.) | Ward II (no.) | Ward III (no.) | Ward IV (no.) | Total (No.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kachcha | 1 (16.67) | 9 (18.00) | 3 (10.00) | 10 (16.67) | 23 (15.75) |
| Semi-Pucca | 2 (33.33) | 13 (20.00) | 6 (20.00) | 13 (21.67) | 34 (23.29) |
| Pacca (Assam type) | 2 (33.33) | 23 (46.00) | 14 (46.67) | 26 (43.330 | 65 (44.520 |
| Pacca (RCC) | 1 (16.67) | 5 (10.00) | 7 (23.33) | 11 (18.33) | 24 (16.44) |
| Total | 6 (100.00) | 50 (100.00) | 30 (100.00) | 60 (100.00) | 146 (100.00) |

**Source: Field survey.**
**NB: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of the column totals.**

**Nature of Problems Faced By the Sample Dwellers:**
The respondents do not have any complaint against any community. They sincerely feel, they are living with communal harmony for last one decade of years. However, so far as civic

amenities are concerned, more than 50% of the respondents in every ward have complained against poor drainage system, narrow roads and poor sanitation facility. 3.42% (5 nos.) of the households have reported against environmental hazards due to fish and meat markets in public vicinity, irregular clearance of garbage and drains etc.

**Opinion Poll about Reopening of the Stilwell Road:**
Keeping with the avowed objectives of the seminar, in the side line of the present study, the investigators made an attempt to develop an opinion poll about reopening of the historic Stilwell road. Each of the sample households were asked whether they knew about the Stilwell Road, if yes, do they want it to be reopened and if reopened what consequences will follow. These questions were thrown for any member of the family to be answered. They answer received are presented hereunder:

- Totally unaware about Stilwell road – 37(25.34%) households.
- Partially aware of (heard about) Stilwell Road – 61(41.78%) households.
- Fully aware about Stillwell Road – 48(32.88%)

Thus it appears that 74.66% (109 nos.) of the sample Bangali households residing in the township area of Margherita are either partially or fully aware about the Stilwell Road.

Now, these 109 households who reported to have either full or partial knowledge about the existence of Stilwell Road were asked as to whether they want the road to be reopened. The answers received were as follows:

- Indifferent – 25(22.94%)
- Should be reopened without further delay –69(63.30%)
- Should not be reopened at all – 16(14.68%)

It can be seen from the above statements that as many as 63.30% of the 109 sample respondents who are either partly or wholly aware of the Stilwell Road, are boldly in favour of reopening of the road, while 14.68% are deadly in against. This means that 47.26% of the total sample Bengali households of Margherita township area are sincerely in favour of reopening of the Stilwell Road as against 10.96% of those who are hostile to its reopening. The remaining 41.78% are either totally unaware or are indecisive.

After that, the 85 respondents who either supported (69 nos) or opposed (16 nos.) reopening of the Stilwell Road, were asked to give maximum of two reasons behind their answers. The answers received are summed up as under:

**Supporters of Reopening the Road---Total 69 Nos.**
- It will open innumerable opportunities for business expansion – **56 (81.16%)**
- It will make easy traveling to South-East Asian countries including China and Myanmar—**14(20.29%)**
- It will usher in development of the area and will create employment avenues for the unemployed youths – **34(53.62%)**

**Opposers of Reopening the Road –Total 16 Nos.**
- Reopening of the road will aggravate out border problem with China – **16 (100%)**
- Insurgents will find easy passage to our land – **12 (75.0%)**
- Illegal activities like drug trafficking, smuggling, etc will spurt up in this area – **2(12.5%)**
- Cheap Chinese goods will flood our market and parish the house industries – **2(12.5%)**

**Conclusion:**
The Bengalis in the township area of Margherita live a modest life. They in general are moderately educated, but majority of the house heads are poorly educated. Nearly 32% of the families are living in the study area for long back; while about 61% settled down after India's Independence. They are mostly of General Caste (65%) other than Brahmin (11.64%). Occupationally they are engaged in varied activities. However, doing small business and serving in private sector organizations are common. They in general are hard working and know to adopt themselves in diverse situations. Most of them are conscious about civic matters and majority of them are in the monthly income range of Rs. 5000—20000.

About reopening of the Stilwell Road 47.26% of them are sincerely in favour of its reopening, while only 10.96% are hostile to such move.

## REFERENCES

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