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**SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF DAKHANI SIKHS
IN PARTICULAR AND OTHER
SIKH MINORITIES SETTLED IN SOUTH AND NORTH-EAST
INDIA**

**A PROJECT
OF THE
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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.....	9
UNIVERSE OF THE STUDY.....	10
METHODOLOGY.....	14
2. DAKHANI SIKHS.....	19
3. AXOMIYA AND OTHER SIKHS IN THE NORTH-EAST	41
4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS.....	58
5. CONCLUSION.....	166
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS.....	183
REFERENCES.....	189

APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE

PHOTOGRAPHS



PREFACE

The present study owes to the initiatives of Dr. Jaspal Singh, Vice Chancellor of Punjabi University, Patiala for suggesting to undertake this work to reach out to the minority Sikh communities in the Deccan and the North-East. A study on the Dakhini Sikhs, Sikligars, Lobanas and Vanjaaras has already been commissioned by the National Commission for Minorities, New Delhi in 2009 under the protégé of then member of the NCM, ShriHarcharan Singh Josh. That study presented a very dismal state of affairs of these communities which of course are not only confined to the Deccan but to almost the whole of India. The above mentioned study however confined itself to select Indian states in south, western and northern regions with a sufficiently large sample of 3351 respondents but does not include the Sikhs in the North-East that too has a significant and sizable Sikh population and many amongst them deserve earnest attention of the government for welfare schemes and other benefits due to the minorities.

North
East?

The present study intends looking into further details of the socio-economic status indicators of these communities that have not been addressed by the previous study more penetratingly and confining it to a specific region in the south namely the erstwhile Deccan state of the Nizam of Hyderabad. By limiting the study to a region many nuances could be deciphered which could not be culled out from a pan-Indian sample even if large. A look at the kinship relations of these Sikhs also validates the choice of this region because all Dakhani Sikhs have themselves married in the districts of the erstwhile Deccan state and still marry their children there despite the fact that now that state is divided amongst three states of the modern India namely larger Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka with nodal centres like

192

Hyderabad, Nanded and Bidar. These three cities are otherwise also significant in their own right. Hyderabad is the capital of Andhra Pradesh and an otherwise large metropolis that dominates the whole of Andhra Pradesh and the south India. Nanded and Bidar are important pilgrim centres of Sikh religion and the religious tourism has pumped in new vigour and life into these otherwise sleeping towns.

192

cultural homogeneity

In the context of Dakhani Sikhs the present study also attempts to focus on the socio-cultural aspects of their existence besides the socio-economic variables. It also examines the cultural and social ties with Punjab that is believed to be the birth place of Sikhs and wherever they are they remain in 'touch' with this place. How do Dakhani Sikhs and others relate themselves to Punjab? What relation do they have with the cultural products of this place? How do they define themselves in relation to people here etc.? These are a few issues that this study intends to explore and it has shown some interesting results one may find them surprising if not shocking.

Besides the above distinctive features the novelty of this study also lies in examining the state of affairs of not all Sikhs in the North-East but like the Dakhani ones, of the Axomiya Sikhs who make an interesting case in themselves. They are in Assam for the last about two hundred years and are inadvertently rural and no one has made them the subjects of such an inquiry earlier. All of them belong to a few villages, all in the district of Nagaon.

These findings of the present study are themselves significant in the light of disparate nature of social existence of the almost same stock of people originating from a common source. This is the new dimension added to the previous study that may further open up new fields of inquiry of social historical and sociological significance besides the policy formulation for their amelioration.

This study could not be ventured without the support of numerous people and the foremost amongst them are, I reiterate, Dr. Jaspal Singh, the Vice Chancellor of Punjabi University, Patiala and Shri H.S. Hanspal, then member (2009-2012) of the National Commission for Minorities, New Delhi. Their interest in this project could usher things forward without which it would not have been possible. This duo deserves my special thanks. Many thanks are due to Dr. Ajaib Singh, the present member of the NCM whose support and encouragement has made this *Report* see the light of the day.

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(192)

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Besides heartfelt thanks to my dear friends Professor Udayon Misra and Tillotama Misra at Guwahati, I am also thankful to Nand Singh, ASP in Assam Police, Rajinder Singh, Inspector Police (retd) at Barkola, Prof. Pritam Singh, President of the Assamese Sikh Welfare Association at Nagaon, Harcharan Singh at Chaparmukh, Laxmi Parsad Singh, Manager, Punjab and Sindh Bank at Guwahati and Bhupen Singh, former Principal of the Pragjyotish degree college at Guwahati deserve special thanks for laying thread bare the oral history of their community. These are the Axomiya Sikhs of Nagaon district.

The list of people to be thanked at Shillong is no small either. Foremost amongst them is Gurjit Singh, Principal of the Guru Nanak Middle School at Barra Bazar. He is also the secretary of the Barra Bazar Safai Karamcharis Association whose President is Billoo Singh. I thank him too for information and support. The education and commitment to the cause are the forte of Gurjit Singh who is spearheading the legal battle against the municipal and urban development authorities of Shillong 'bent on' ousting them from that place. Prem Singh, the president of the Gora Line Association at Laitumkhrach, an employee and a leader of the *safai karamcharis* at NEHU is also to be thanked for helping the project fellows do fieldwork in their colony.

Last but not the least is the turn of project fellows whose sincerity and dedication to execute the work assigned to them has made the quality of the data collected worth appreciation. Without their commitment to the job this work would not have been possible. Aminul Islam and Utpal Borah, the research students of the departments of Sociology and Anthropology at Gauhati University respectively have taken pains amongst odds to collect the data from the field both in Assam and Meghalaya. Venu Gopal Reddy, a research scholar of the department of Sociology at Osmania University, Hyderabad singlehandedly looked after the data collection in the Deccan. Habeeb Hydari, a research scholar at Maulana Azad University, Hyderabad and have helped me browse the records of the Nizam in Persian at the Archives. I owe thanks to the Director of the Andhra State Archives at Hyderabad Dr. Zareena Parveen. The Deputy Director Dr. S. Ramakrishna is to be thanked for efforts made to locate the information about Dakhani Sikhs there. Assistant Director Md. Abdul Raqeeb has also assisted in locating the relevant information from the stacks. I am thankful to him.

196

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Birinder Pal Singh

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THE SIKHS IN THE DECCAN AND THE NORTH-EAST INDIA

INTRODUCTION

Each one of us knows that the Sikhs are an enterprising people found in each and every nook and corner of the globe whatever be the conditions of life and work there. Some also say that they like potatoes grow everywhere. The notion of being a stranger at a place distant from home is quite alien to their temperament. Some freak traveller may ask the owner of a wayside Shere Punjab *dhaba*, '*Bai ji, aitheey kiven?*' Brother, how come you are here? A usual reply is: '*Bas ji, aitheey kumm mil gaya, beh gaye.*' I got the work (occupation) here, hence settled down. It is not that one finds such *dhabas* on the trunk routes but even in the remote areas of the country. I am told that there used to be one such *dhaba* on the Indo-Burmese border as well.

Neil Armstrong's popular anecdote also sums up the adventurous Sikh spirit and their zest for life. For the information of younger generation: When Armstrong had just put his first step on moon that was to be a giant leap for the (hu)mankind, a sardarji walked up to him and said: '*Badshao kithey chaln'ai.*' Sir, where do you wish to go? Bemused and deflated Armstrong asked him: 'How come you are here? I thought I was the first one to land on the moon.' He replied casually: '*Bas ji Partition pichhon aithe'i aa gaye si.*' I settled here after the partition of the country.

The moon is farther but Deccan and the North-East (henceforth NE) are not so close either where we find a substantial Sikh population both in the urban and rural areas of these far flung regions of the country where the socio-economic and political conditions are not so congenial either especially at the latter place where

the local versus the outsider issue is at the core of regional politics and militant violence. It is interesting to note certain similarities between the two distant regions of the country as far as the Sikh population is concerned. We come across three types of Sikhs who believe themselves different from one another.

Those who travelled with Sikh Gurus

(i) The **first type of Sikhs** to reach there, at both the places, are those who travelled with the Sikh Gurus and stayed there to further the cause of Sikh religion and complete the project launched by the respective Gurus. The ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur visited Assam in 1669. He stayed at Dhubri on the right bank of Brahmaputra then in the district of Goalpara but now the headquarters of a new district by the same name. The Guru then moved on to Guwahati and visited the famous Kamakhya Devi temple. A part of his hand written scroll that has been saved from destruction is still preserved by a *panda* there whose great grandfather had the privilege to meet the Guru. It is a prized possession with that family so claims the priest that has been properly framed in glass.

Progeny of followers of Guru Tegh Bahadur

One version of Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit is that he was preaching and reviving the message of the first Sikh Guru Nanak Dev who had also visited Dhubri among other places in Assam, where he had a discourse with Srimanta Shankradeva. Another version is that when Aurangzeb asked Raja Ram Singh of Amber to conquer Assam following the defeat of an earlier attempt by the Moghul forces, the Raja requested the Guru then stationed at Patna along with his family, to accompany his army to ward off the evil and magical effects of the sorcerers in Assam that had the reputation of being the land of tantra and mantra. The army contingent and the Guru first went to Dacca and then to Assam. The Guru returned to Patna when he got the news of the birth of his son, later called Guru Gobind Singh.

Likewise, the Dakhani Sikhs argue that we are a progeny of those Sikhs that accompanied Guru Gobind Singh to Nanded. No doubt some of them returned to Punjab with Banda Bahadur to accomplish the task assigned to him by the Guru but others stayed put to look after the gurdwara there and to further the cause of Sikh religion, such is the belief of people there. They claim that they are still carrying out this task assigned to them. The Sikh religion or *Sikhi* in colloquial terms is surviving there due to them only.

Descendant
of Guru
Gobind
Singh's
followers

The Sikligars who are particular in keeping their complete Sikh form and widely spread all over the southern peninsula, believe that they accompanied the tenth master Guru Gobind Singh while he was passing through Rajputana. These are tribal people of Rajput origin who used to *saiqal* swords. It is an Arabic word that means to polish. This community specialised in the task of manufacturing swords, knives and daggers etc. Though swords are no longer in use on that scale as earlier since the wars are fought with different weapons but a Sikh bridegroom at the time of Anand Karaj, the solemnisation of marriage by circumambulations around the Sikh scripture Guru Granth Sahib, must have a sword in his hand. Thus, as a matter of fact each Sikh household has a sword or two. Besides that these are also used for ceremonial occasions like the *nagar kirtan jaloos* (religious procession in the city on the occasion of a day of Sikh religious significance that may be a guru's birth or death anniversary or Baisakhi, the birth of the Khalsa etc.). Sikligars are still engaged in this task especially at Nanded. These Sikhs are very particular about their Sikh form and maintain it intact even if their living conditions are dismal. They are basically a nomadic tribe but now they have been constrained by the forces of modernisation and urbanisation to shun nomadism and adopt a settled way of life to

keep
sikh
form

make a living but still they hover around the place of their settlement carrying out the chores of their traditional occupational and selling them in the neighbouring area.

There are also the tribal Banjara Sikhs that have specialised in the salt trade traditionally. At some stage they also carried armaments and ammunitions for the marching armed forces. Their caravans are called a *tanda* which is a convoy of bullock carts loaded with material. The colony of their settlement is also referred to as *tanda*. They had also taken to Sikhism and they believe that Makhan Shah Labana who recognised the ninth guru Tegh Bahadur at Baba Bakala (District Gurdaspur in Punjab) was a Banjara. Another noted and revered one is Lakhi Shah Banjara who cremated the beheaded body of Guru Tegh Bahadur after his martyrdom at Delhi. It is also a nomadic tribe distributed through out the length and breadth of the country. It is quite likely that some of them might have travelled with the Guru's contingent carrying and supplying food and munition. The tribal Hindu Banjaras around Nanded and Bidar are also converting to Sikhism through a formal training in seminaries at the above mentioned religious centres of Sikhism where they learn to recite *Bani* with and without musical instruments.

(ii) **Another type of Sikhs** at both places are those who believe themselves to be the descendants of a contingent of Sikh soldiers despatched there by Sher-e-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh to support the local rulers. The 'local' Axomiya Sikhs in particular believe themselves to be the progeny of those soldiers who were sent there to support the Ahom king Chandrakanta Singha against the Burmese invasion in 1820.

Similarly, Dakhani Sikhs too believe, and each one has this story to narrate that they are the descendants of those soldiers that were sent to maintain law and

order in the erstwhile state of Nizam of Hyderabad Deccan. The oral history informs that 14 Risalas were sent by Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab at the request of the Nizam of Hyderabad. The Axomiya and Dakhani Sikhs are the focus of the present study.

(iii) There is yet **another kind of Sikh people** who proclaim to be Punjabi Sikhs. These are also of two types, if one may say so, one who had been inhabiting this region as in the case of erstwhile Assam for the past about one century. They are themselves safai karamcharis or their descendants. The second type of Punjabi Sikhs are the entrepreneurs and business people who came here not for employment but for reasons of business. Some of them are those who settled here following the partition of the country in 1947 and others are the transporters who came later especially over the last about forty years or even later. They handle all kinds of surface transport companies from passenger transportation through cabs and buses to trucks carrying goods of all sorts and the oil tankers etc. It is a consequence of development of roads and proliferation of business what is called economic development.

Likewise, in Deccan too similar categories or types of Sikhs are seen except one that belongs solely to the category of safai karamcharis, or a particular caste. There are Punjabi Sikhs belonging to the trading castes and the peasantry both doing trade as in the North-East. The retailers and wholesalers belong to the trading caste (khatri) and they came around the turn of Indian independence. They have ventured into many trades very successfully indeed. Wherever one may go in Hyderabad, Bagga Wines are there to greet you. Others in the transport business or auto-parts belong to the peasant stock. They have ventured mainly into transport business very successfully indeed. The motor parts are virtually their monopoly in

the two metropolises – Hyderabad and Guwahati. In Hyderabad Punjabi Sikhs have a hardbound glossy directory of their own bearing addresses of their business and residence with complete contact details. But it does not include Dakhani Sikhs leave alone the tribal Sikligar and Banjara or Lambada Sikhs. As in the North-East, they consider themselves superior to the local ones.

Besides these commonalities at the regional levels, there are **similarities at the level of intra-community** characteristics as well. The Sikhs –Axomiya and Dakhani– at both the places in the North-East and the Deccan have immersed themselves completely in the local language and culture. They are fluent and comfortable in Axomiya in Assam, Khasi in Meghalaya, in Telgu as in Andhra Pradesh, in Marathi and Kannada too which are the languages of their residential districts and regions in Maharashtra and Karnataka respectively. The Axomiya Sikhs living in the rural areas of the district of Nagaon know only Axomiya and no other language. The *safai karmacharis* of Assam and Shillong (Meghalaya) are also proficient in the local language (Khasi) despite complete command on their mother tongue, Punjabi. They converse in Hindi too very fluently in the public domain though use Punjabi at home.

This localisation has been made possible because the ancestors of these Sikhs married local women in Assam and the Deccan and did not force their spouses to accept their language (Punjabi) and culture. It is for this ignorance of Punjabi as in the case of Axomiya Sikhs and its lack of understanding and proficiency in the Deccan that these people are looked down upon by the Punjabi Sikhs as inferior to them besides the fact that their economic status also comes in their way of social recognition. The latter are rich and affluent while the former local

Sikhs are only eking out their living having low income. Those in service have lower level jobs. Paradoxically, these people are not considered Sikhs at all. Why? Because they do not speak Punjabi. The Punjabi Sikhs tend to comment: '*Eh keho jihey Sikh ne, Punjabi nahin boldey,*' thus suggesting that they are lesser Sikhs because they do not know Punjabi language.

Though Axomiya Sikhs of Nagaon do not speak or understand Punjabi but Dakhani Sikhs do understand Punjabi but do not speak it. They are more comfortable speaking Hindi, Telgu, Marathi or Kannada as the case may be. During my fieldwork in the Deccan, a respondent would converse with me in Hindi but would switch on to Telgu with my project fellow Venu Gopal Reddy, unmindful of my presence and lack of my understanding of their conversation. This is suggestive of their comfort level with the local language. It is certainly a good and healthy sign of their localisation that is not liked by the Punjabi Sikhs.

Another common thing between the Axomiya and Dakhani Sikhs is their commitment to maintain the Sikh form in letter and spirit. They mince no words in claiming that '*Hamney Sikhi ko sambhala hai, Punjab mein to bura haal hai.*' Literally put, we have conserved the Sikh religion (form) that is in ruins in Punjab. They know well that the Sikh form is vanishing in Punjab day after day. The media has given them this exposure of Punjab besides the fact that some of them have also travelled here. Moreover, they also see them especially at Nanded and Bidar where pilgrims from Punjab visit regularly and in large numbers. It is relevant to note that religious tourism has picked up in a big way over the last more than a decade. The 'conducted tours' from Punjab to all the important pilgrim centres of Sikhism is a flourishing business which has increased the possibility of encounter between the local Sikhs and those from Punjab, hence this reaction. Gurdwara Sach Khand at

Hazoor Sahib (Nanded) is next to Harmandar Sahib at Amritsar in importance and adoration.

For a local non-Sikh person the above mentioned distinctions amongst Sikhs are neither existent nor relevant. Sikhs for them are all those with a beard and a turban who visit a Sikh 'temple'. They are a very helpful and generous people. A senior professor friend at Hyderabad mentions that 'in case of need a Sikh neighbour is the first among others to extend a helping hand.' It is gratifying to hear that certain essential tenets of Sikh religion and philosophy are practised by its followers in a distant land. Since many respondents were drivers themselves they observe that ladies especially feel secure with the Sikh drivers. The local non-Sikh persons also attest this observation. This is also true of the NE.

One may analyse and explain the data collected along the lines of types of classification suggested above, that is, for each of the types like Dakhani, Sikligar, Axomiya and *safai karamcharis* but that would do us no good since the socio-economic and living conditions of the respondents are so similar that they pass off well as a single homogeneous group which is why all types have been discussed together for an easy comprehension by the reader. The differences between two regions –NE and the Deccan– at the socio-economic level are not of much significance but at the level of cultural and religious practices are quite different that have been discussed separately. Nevertheless the similarities and dissimilarities between the Axomiya and Dakhani as well other types of Sikhs shall be explained separately as well as in comparison to each other wherever possible. Greater differentiation amongst the socio-economic variables would have called for analysis

and discussion of each type of Sikh community separately which is not relevant here.

Objectives of the study

The proposed study would make an attempt to undertake such issues that are very crucial, but were not entertained by the previous study by the National Commission for Minorities by Dr. Pradeep Bijalwan et al. under the guidance of the NCM member Harcharan Singh 'Josh' entitled *A Study Report on the Social, Economic, Educational, Cultural, Traditional and Occupational Status of Sikligars, Vanjaaras, Lobanas and Dakhini Sikhs* (2009). The above mentioned study includes Dakhani Sikhs besides the Sikligars and Banjaras too but they are taken from a much wider universe from the states in the north and the south. Moreover it does not include the Axomiya Sikhs and the safai karamcharis in the north-east. The present study differs from the earlier one in this respect. The major objectives of the present study are as follows:

- **Socio-economic profiles** of all the concerned communities shall be prepared in detail. Their profiles of poverty shall help understand their predicament and make policy for their socio-economic empowerment.
- **Ethnographic accounts** would be noted extensively for further exploration.
- It would help construct their **social history** fruitfully for further inquiry.
- Dakhani and Axomiya Sikhs seem to be generic terms over-riding internal differences amongst them that this study tends to sort out.

- The **patterns of social and cultural adaptation** shall be delineated that will make an important contribution to social and cultural anthropology especially for further micro studies.
- It would also help institute **comparison** between two streams of communities that originated similarly under comparable circumstances. Yet there are strong similarities and dissimilarities owing to different socio-cultural conditions. The NE is radically different from the Deccan region in South India. The former is predominantly tribal and liberal and the latter feudatory and conservative.
- This study would also dispel claims on the **homogeneity of the Sikh community** in the two regions.
- If the distinctive traits of these communities are established it would help them achieve the **minority status**, thus leading them to socio-economic and political empowerment obtaining doles from the government's welfare schemes.
- This study can suggest **measures** to win over these communities who are made to believe that they are 'duplicate Sikhs'.
- The study would like to offer **recommendations** to the government and NGOs for ameliorating the living and working conditions of Dakhani and Axomiya Sikhs and also of *safai karamcharis* of the NE for immediate implementation.

Universe of the study

The universe of the present study is the specific type of Sikh communities settled in the South and the North-East India who are called Dakhani and Axomiya

Sikhs. They are also referred to as 'duplicate' Sikhs by the Punjabi Sikhs settled there. The objective of the study is to look at them from the point of view of the National Commission for Minorities, New Delhi if these communities who are a minority there by all standards on basis of ethnic or religious criteria, need the government's attention with regard to some welfare measures due to them to improve their socio-economic conditions. Therefore while focussing on these two communities specifically such other Sikh communities have also been included that deserve the attention of the National Commission for Minorities and hence of the government of India urgently. I am referring to the case of Sikligar and Banjara Sikhs in the Deccan and the *safai karmacharis* in the NE. These groups of Sikh people duly qualify as communities since the former two in the Deccan are basically tribal who had been nomadic as well and are utterly poor. The latter are not tribal but a caste group made into a closed interrelated network of social relations there cutting across two states of Assam and Meghalaya. They are ethnically Punjabi and religiously Sikhs who are settled at Shillong and Dispur/Guwahati over the last one century, some even longer.

NOT THE
SCOPE
OF THIS
STUDY

The Sikhs are an ethnic group and do claim socio-religious solidarity amongst themselves for all political and economic purposes but they are not as homogeneous as their leaders –political and religious– make them to be by any standards of sociological imagination neither in Punjab, their erstwhile home state nor at both the places of this study. There are different types of them with different socio-economic and demographic indicators. For instance, they may be categorised into three broad types. One, the oldest of them have been living there for a few centuries, to be precise about two centuries. They are the Axomiya and Dakhani Sikhs. Two, there are other local tribal communities who either migrated there even

earlier especially in the South and some of them have converted to Sikh religion, as for instance the Banjaras. Thirdly, there are those who migrated there especially around the partition of the country in 1947 or after that. This type also includes quite a significant number of those Sikhs who settled there over the past thirty to forty years for business due to the expansion of economic activities.

The Sikhs in this category belong to business of retail and whole sale and transport primarily. The distinction further is also clear and marked. Those who migrated from West Punjab in Pakistan at the time of partition of the country are traders and are Khatri by caste. They indulge in trades of various kinds, from cloth to grocery etc. The other type are the transporters with own transport companies and spare parts trade in the metropolises of the South and the North-East, that is, Hyderabad and Guwahati respectively. These are called Punjabi Sikhs at both the places. They are affluent and well entrenched in local economy and politics. They keep their social identity distinct and separate from other local Sikhs and do not have relations of marriage and kinship with them.

Of the three types of Sikh communities mentioned above the present study focuses on the first two viz. those settled there for about two centuries and the local tribals as well, as in the Deccan but not the third type, that is, the Punjabi Sikhs. It has been the limitation of the present study that for certain constraints the Banjara respondents could not be sampled adequately. In the North-East, there is another category which has been included in the study and that refers to the Mazhabi Sikhs who have settled there for the past about one century. They deserve the

government's attention for their poverty and slum dwelling. They are located in clusters at two places only – Shillong in Meghalaya and Dispur/Guwahati in Assam.

There are no tribal Sikhs or converts of the kind in the North-East as we find Sikligar and Banjara Sikhs in the South or Deccan to be precise. But the Axomiya Sikhs are comparable to the Dakhani Sikhs in many ways. The later term refers to those Sikhs in the Deccan who are a progeny of the soldiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh sent to support the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1830. Likewise, by the former we mean those Sikhs who are a progeny of a similar contingent sent to support the Ahom ruler in 1820. The difference between the two is that the Axomiya Sikhs are settled in the villages of Nagaon district in Assam namely Barkola, Chaparmukh and Hatipara etc. They are land owners and agriculturists whose children are now migrating to town for education and employment.

*Soldiers
settled
down
as land
owners
agr*

Dakhani Sikhs are not all those living in the south but only those who are residents of the State of Deccan. This was the kingdom of the Nizams of Hyderabad from the eighteenth century till the declaration of independence in 1947 and later till 1952 when this state was annexed to the Union of India. It comprised of sixteen districts that now stand trifurcated into three states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. The larger chunk of course lays in Andhra Pradesh namely Hyderabad (Secundrabad, Ranga Reddy District), Warangal, Adilabad, Medak, Nalgonda, Nizamabad, Karimnagar and Mahboobnagar besides the five districts in the present Maharashtra namely Nanded, Aurangabad, Parbhani, Beed and Osmanabad and three in Karnataka state viz Bidar, Raichur and Gulbarga. Bidar does not have a large population as compared to Nanded in Maharashtra. The latter has a large concentration of Dakhani Sikhs especially due to the Gurdwara Sach

Khand Hazoor Sahib being one of the five *takhts* (literally a throne but means the seat of authority) of Sikh religion.

Methodology

From the above universe, the present study focuses on the Axomiya Sikhs and the *safai karamcharis* or Mazhabis in the NE and Dakhani, Sikligar and Banjara Sikhs in the Deccan. Dakhani Sikhs are largely concentrated in two major cities viz. Hyderabad and Nanded. At the former place they are largely confined to the Sikh Chhawaniat at Barambala also called Maharaja Ranjit Singh Nagar in Kishenbagh (Attapur), Gowliguda, Huppuguda, Ameerpet, Rehmatnagar now called Guru Ram Das Nagar, Rodamistry Nagar, Kothapet in Gokulnagar, etc. (The Sikligar Sikhs are located at Guru Gobind Singh Colony (Ellamabanda) in Kukattipally region of the Ranga Reddy district, Balnagar, Subash Nagar. Outside Hyderabad, Dakhani Sikhs and Sikligars both are found in the state of Andhra Pradesh at Nizamabad, Karimnagar, Adilabad, Warangal, Nalgonda and Medak to mention the prominent centres from where respondents have been included in the sample. Nanded and Bidar are two other important places with significant Sikh population from where requisite samples are drawn. With the help of local leaders of the community, a households list from each colony or settlement was obtained and random sample drawn taking care that it represents the universe uniformly. The total number of respondents at both the places is 1011 out of these 540 are from the NE and the remaining 471 from the Deccan. Let me reiterate that given the homogeneity of the universe it is a fairly large sample.

already done

What is the population?
How was sample taken?
done

As mentioned above, the case of sample drawing is not complex in the North-East. The Axomiya Sikhs are confined to the district of Nagaon and the *safai karamcharis* or Mazhabis (as they are addressed in Punjab) at Guwahati/Dispur and Shillong. Their identification and accessibility is most easy since they inhabit the slums and have large concentration at those specific places well demarcated.

Sampling was not a problematic issue since the homogeneity of the universe and the sample is manifestly conspicuous in terms of almost all the indices of the socio-economic status (SES). A detailed interview schedule with open and closed end questions is served to the respondents selected randomly in a stratified manner. The latter type addresses to such issues where the scope of variation is least and specific information is required on given particular parameters. The former types of questions are asked to elicit the view point of the respondents that are more subjective than objective and where the respondent's subjectivity is significant to throw light on her beliefs and practices.

Interestingly, the Sikhs at both places in the Deccan and the North-East are imbued in the local culture. Thus the language of their communication is local, that is, Telugu in the Deccan, now Andhra Pradesh; Marathi in Nanded; Kannad in Bidar; Axomiya in Assam and Khasi in Shillong. No doubt they feel more comfortable and at home in the local language but Hindi is their popular lingua franca all across the two regions except in the case of Axomiya Sikhs who are rural based. To facilitate free and easy communication with the respondents, local project fellows are appointed for the collection of data. They are asked to record information verbatim and wherever necessary to give their translations but using the parenthesis for the original. The responses to the open questions are noted on separate sheets for details. The project fellows are also asked to maintain field diaries with their

comments and observations on the respondent, her behaviour, her responses and whatever significant they find there. These diaries are maintained on daily basis. They are advised to focus more on those respondents that are informative and forthcoming with the required information. They are also asked to identify such respondents for later interview with the project director.

Ethnographic accounts of the select respondents are best obtained by detailed interviews that have been recorded by the project director himself. These are the leaders of the communities, certain heads of households, welfare organisations, institutions, government officers and other well informed persons of the community and the region. The case studies of those who could not make to the sample have also been conducted. These respondents provide useful information that enriches the quality of data.

The secondary sources are also used to supplement and corroborate the information provided by the respondents in the field. The state government archives – Andhra Pradesh State Archives at Hyderabad and Assam State Archives at Guwahati – and the Meghalaya State Record Room at Shillong are also consulted though without much success since the record keeping is in mess and in total disarray. No proper cataloguing or information is available besides the paucity of staff which is always used as an alibi for the poor management of the records and documents. Salar Jung Museum Library, both English and Persian sections, Gauhati University Library, Library of the Department of Antiquities, Art and Culture of Assam at Guwahati and the Meghalaya Government Library and the Meghalaya State Secretariat Library, both at Shillong have all been consulted for relevant information and records.

The records of the Nizam of Hyderabad about the Nazim-i-Jamiat-i-Sikhan are in Persian. Persian readers have been deployed to browse through the material and also to translate certain documents. Same strategy has also been employed at Assam but not to look into the archival material but translate such documents that have been published in Axomiya magazines or books.

All information obtained through the questionnaire is transferred to the code sheets for computation. The frequency distribution tables are prepared for all questions for various classifying variables. Column-wise the tables give options of the question that have been analysed. Row-wise the tables give various sub-groups of the classifying variable. The Chi square test of independence and the coefficient of contingency (C) based on the same have also been computed. The notations used are: ** shows significance at 0.01 level while * shows significance at 0.05 level. It is easier to make tables of the codified data especially of the closed or fixed options type questions but difficult for the open end types. The latter are handled manually.

Freq.
dist.

A great limitation of the study is the lack of efforts made by the project fellows to tackle the open-end questions that need consistent probing and goading both due to the subjective content of the information asked. The respondents have also faltered with these questions. The whole idea of putting such questions is to know the mind of the respondent and what goes into the making of that thought or action significant. For a simple question like, 'What is the seasonal cycle of work in a year?' the project fellows are given details about the cycle that each occupation has, including that of a housewife, but not to much use. Other questions that need

214

subjective insights are also filled nominally. Similarly such questions that require a brief history or explanation draw flak. The responses are filled in virtual short hand. Despite such weaknesses the quality of other information collected is rich and significant and more so for the simple reason that such a detailed and elaborated exercise has been done for the first time in the life of these respondents especially in the NE.

Chapter II

DAKHANI SIKHS

Dakhani Sikhs derive their identity and this nomenclature from the fact that they are settled in Dakhan or Deccan that means south in common parlance but this is not the sense in which Dakhani Sikhs would like to know about them though there are some amongst them who say so: 'We are called Dakhani Sikhs because we stay in Dakhan.'* The dominant view is that the Dakhani Sikhs are the residents of the Nizam's state of Hyderabad so qualified by the term Deccan because there is another Hyderabad in the north, in the United Punjab and now in Pakistan, that is called Hyderabad Sindh. Nanak Singh Nishter writes: 'Deccani is not a word for segregation from the mainstream Sikhs, but it is a geographical identity which was attributed to the North Indians settled in Hyderabad Deccan such as Deccani Pathan etc.' (Nishter 2011: 15)

The Nizam's state of Hyderabad comprised of 16 districts (see Introduction) that have been trifurcated now in three states of Andhra Pradesh with the largest share, Maharashtra that includes the famous Takht Sach Khand Hazoor Sahib, Nanded with five districts and Karnataka with Bidar as an important pilgrim centre called Gurdwara Nanak Jhira with three districts of erstwhile Nizam's state. The Sikhs are spread all over the south India but prefix Dakhani goes only with those who belong to the state of Hyderabad Deccan. Urdu that has been the official language of the Nizam's state is also called Dakhani Urdu. It is the peoples' lingua franca too which is why Dakhani Sikhs feel comfortable in conversing in Hindi. Dakhan also has its specific cuisine such as the famous *biryani Hyderabad*. A noted historian of the Deccan H.K. Sherwani notes:

(2/6)

The scions of the dynasty (Qutb Shahis) formed a connection link between the Bahmanis and the Asif Jahis, and they were also promoters of that peculiar culture which is sometimes dubbed as Dakhni culture, itself the result of the synthesis of cultures from particularly all parts of the country as well as from overseas, which came face to face in the great table land of which the Qutbshahi dominions formed a significant part. (Sherwani 1972: ix)

As a result of the division of Nizam's territory on basis of linguistic states, now Sikhs of Andhra Pradesh speak Telgu and Marathi and Kannada in Maharashtra and Karnataka respectively since their location has not been disturbed with the linguistic demarcation of states. Despite this linguistic division and state allocation for administrative purposes social linkages cross-cut these provincial barriers and marriages take place between Sikhs all over this region though largely amongst the Dakhani Sikhs themselves.

Social linkages

Dakhani Sikhs take pride in informing that they are the descendants of the soldiers of that contingent of the Sikh army that was sent by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to support the forces of the then Nizam of Hyderabad, fourth in line named Nawab Nasir Uddaula (1829-57) whose regime was virtually in shambles and anarchy prevailed all over. In the words of an Englishman: 'Despite British influence, the administration was appallingly bad. Finance was hopelessly muddled. The countryside for half a century was dominated by Arabs and Rohillas, mostly disbanded mercenaries from the Maratha and Pindari armies. At one period the Arabs practically overshadowed the government.' (Barton 1934: 197) The Sikh forces were meant to restore internal order under such circumstances.

There is no historical record to confirm this fact (see Conclusion) so believed by the people living there that such a contingent was formally dispatched. Peoples' memory acknowledges that Chandu Lal, the then Prime Minister of the Nizam of Hyderabad was instrumental in soliciting this support from Punjab. He wielded much power and authority in the Nizam's state. He had the title of Raja Bahadur. His brother and other relations were also a part of the state administration. It is chronicled about him:

A talented and shrewd statesman, Chandu Lal tried to make good his deficiencies in social status and strength of character by means of intrigue and jobbery. To appease the growing enmity of the Muslim courtiers, and to neutralize the odious opinion they held of him, Chandu Lal distributed money without limit; bribes were made to extravagant and profligate nobles and all their retainers, while large sums passed to the private hoards of the nizam himself; even his favourite mistress, Chandani Begum, became Chandu Lal's special patron... "the whole of the nizam's family was bribed, that every one of his own servants was in Chandu Lal's pay, and that even his own mother-in-law sent to the minister a daily report of the occurrences of the inmost recesses of his house." (Nihang and Singh 2008: 73)

It was Chandu Lal who was instrumental in seeking favours from Maharaja Ranjit Singh since he too was of Punjab origin, Lahore to be precise. He started his career as an accounts keeper and gradually rose to occupy the office of the Prime Minister. Before seeking the Maharaja's favour, an emissary of Nizam of Hyderabad Deccan came to Lahore Darbar and presented a shawl embroidered with silver. Maharaja accepted it but offered the same to the Guru at Harmandar Sahib as

chandoya, a canopy over the Guru Granth Sahib, saying that such a precious gift suits there only. It is also added by the respondents that that gift got destroyed during Operation Bluestar in June 1984 when the Indian armed forces moved into the Golden Temple (Harmandir Sahib) for the eviction of Sikh militants holed therein.

This contingent of 14 Risalas reached there in 1830 and got stationed at two places one at Barambala, locally called Sikh Chhawaniat in Kishan Bagh (Attapur) now a buzzing suburb of Hyderabad, so believe Dakhani Sikhs. An internet source says: '1500 Lahori soldiers in the supervision of 14 Risal was sent to Hyderabad State and Maharaja Ranjit Singh ji announced that the salaries and basic equipments for this Lahori Force will be sent from Punjab. 200 acres of land... was given to Lahori Force for their cantonement.' (2013) But according to Nanak Singh Nishtar:

In 1830, after completing four months of arduous journey, the Sikh army arrived from Lahore in Hyderabad. The army consisted of twelve *Risalas* – army units, each comprising of a 100 personnel and each *Risala* headed by a Risaldar... They were first stationed outside the walled city of Hyderabad near the Mir Alam Tank on Rajinder Nagar road from Bahadar Pura, which place till today is famously known as the *Braham Bala Sikh Chhawani – the Sikh Cantonement*, and the army was called *Jamiyat-i-Lahori* (Army of Lahore). Their salaries and expenses for maintenance of equipment etc., used to come from the treasury of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as they were here on a goodwill mission from Punjab. (Nishtar 2011: 15-6)

Nishter cites a Punjabi source *Hazoori Sathi* by Akali Kor Singh Nihang of Kashmir who wrote in 1933 that Maharaja Ranjit Singh sent 12 *bedey* (contingents) of Sikh Army to help the Nizam for the protection of his state. (Ibid: 12)

A Gurdwara was constructed then that still exists though dilapidated and in ruins. It bears the year of its establishment, 1832. *Karsewa* is on for the construction of an adjoining gurdwara larger in size and elegant in structure in its vicinity. Like at other places all over the country the old structures are neither protected nor preserved but replaced by newly built elegantly styled marbled structures. Two important relics that are preserved there include an illuminated folios copy of the Guru Granth Sahib and an old gun whose wooden butt has been eaten by the termite. All around the gurdwara are settled Dakhani Sikhs including a few Sikligar households and also a colony of those Sikh Sikligars who are not Dakhani but Bijnori (from Bijnor). They had also been there for the last couple of decades. Besides the difference in physical features and facial complexion they do not maintain social relations like marriage etc. with each other. There are 550 households of Dakhani Sikhs but now given the expansion of Hyderabad over the last three decades, many other people have also bought land and houses there while many have rented out theirs.

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Another contingent was stationed at Huppuguda also known as Sikh Chhawani on the other side of the town. There is also a Sikh Village and the Sikh Village Road in Bowenpally just besides the present cantonment now but there are a few households, four to be precise presently. Gowliguda, Ameerpet, Rahmat Nagar also called Guru Ram Das Nagar, are the colonies of Dakhani Sikhs with noticeable presence.

In the whole of Deccan besides Hyderabad, **Nanded** is another place with largest population, Bidar in Karnataka too has but quite small compared to the two mentioned above. Nanded has the privilege to have Sach Khand Gurdwara associated with Guru Gobind Singh. It was not a flourishing town till a few years ago but due to increased flow of Sikh devotees from across the globe both the Gurdwara and the town have grown significantly. The main Gurdwara complex has undergone expansion and construction of *sarais*, the residential accommodation for the devotees with modern amenities like air-conditioners, geyser-fitted bathrooms for the affluent NRIs, the non-resident Indians. Other residential complexes and a Sikh Museum are also coming up. The inflow of tourists has got the small town an air link directly from Mumbai and Delhi. Now a university called Swami Ram Tirath University has also come up beside it being on the railway trunk route from Hyderabad to Mumbai.

Nanded is a small town though a district headquarters by now with 550,564 persons as per the Census of India 2011. that is associated with the last years of Guru Gobind Singh's life. It is noted: 'Guru Gobind Singh arrived at Nanded with all the majesty of a regional Rajput court. In his entourage were 300 heavily armed Akali-Nihang warriors and a stately retinue bustling with mendicants, poets, scholars, musicians, cooks and scribes.' (Nihang and Singh, 2008: 73) It is said he was moving along the Mughal army on its Deccan expedition though others deny it, when he developed a liking for this place situated on the banks of Narmada river. The deep forests and Guru's love for hunting attracted him. Unfortunately, the Guru could not stay there for long. Two Pathan brothers that were allegedly chasing him for revenge stabbed him. The wound was healing when the Guru tried hard to pull

up the strings of a bow. The wound opened up that ultimately proved fatal. It was October 8, 1708.

Historians inform that one of the important events of the Guru's Nanded visit was meeting Banda Bairagi, a warrior turned renouncer of the worldly goods. He motivated him to leave this life of a recluse and do some good to the poor and the exploited since the Moghul regime had unleashed the forces of oppression all over. He got him partake *amrit* and renamed Banda Singh Bahadur. He was dispatched to Punjab with a band of his lieutenants to organise the Sikh forces to confront the empire's terror.

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Guru Gobind Singh's presence at Nanded though short lived was eventful. There are a number of gurdwaras associated with him in and around Nanded such as Banda Ghat, Hira Ghat, Shikar Ghat, Nagina Ghat, Gurdwara Maal Tekdi besides the most important Takht Sach Khand Hazoor Sahib. It has a large contingent of Sikh sewadars that are on the pay rolls of the gurdwara management. They number about 800 working in different capacities performing various duties characteristic of a large institution such as this one that invites a huge influx of pilgrims from all over the world round the year. It would not be an exaggeration that it is quite a potential source of employment for a sizable population of Sikhs –Dakhani, Sikligar and Banjara– and a substantial majority of them are dependent on it directly and indirectly. Besides employment in the gurdwara, the great flux of pilgrims has led to the generation of numerous other allied activities that are a source of productive engagement to the Sikhs there.

Bidar is another important town with a population of 211,944 persons (Census of India 2011) that has Sikh connection due to the visit of Guru Nanak who

222

halted there for his discourses with scholars of Persian and Islamic philosophy and religion since it was an important centre of learning developed by a sufi scholar Mahmud Immamuddin Gawain, the Prime Minister of Bahamani kings of whose empire it was the capital. It is said that the choice of capital was made due to its cool climes and still it has the reputation of being 'a poor man's Ooty' since Ootacamund called Ooty in popular parlance is an important hill station in the Nilgiris of Karnataka established by the British during the colonial reign. This place is also known for a specific kind of carving on metal works and jewellery called *Bidari* art. Bidar has an Air Force station too. It has quite a few famous historical monuments, the remains of the Bahamani kings for tourist interest. A Guru Nanak Engineering College, a medical and nursing college have also come up in recent years.

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Guru Nanak stayed here on his return from Sri Lanka in his second of the four *udasis*. The legend goes that there was dearth of drinking water and the saints and people had been facing this shortage. Guru Nanak is said to have upturned a stone and the spring of water spurted up from that place, both cool and sweet. At that place now stands an elegant gurdwara which has started growing in size over the last two decades. Each one who visits Nanded must go there as well covering a distance of about 200 kms. It has a large staff of various ranks in different positions for executing various functions of a large religious institution like the gurdwara. Local Sikhs –Dakhani, Sikligar and Banjara– are employed there. There are also residential quarters for some of them.

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The Guru Nanak Engineering College was established in August 1980 under the auspices of the Prabandhak Committee, Gurudwara Sri Nanak Jhira Sahib. It used to admit students on donations or capitation fee and large number of them from Punjab used to take admissions over there. The same management of the

educational trust also mooted the proposal to establish a medical college in 1988. As alleged by the present incumbents of the management some local leaders were involved in opening up a medical college sponsored by a Hindu organisation. The political interests led to communal rioting that took the life of six Sikh students of the engineering college. It had a carryover of the earlier anti-Sikh riots that started in Delhi and spread all over the country which involved the targeting of Sikh property in the city of Bidar. This chain of killings did not stop but led to the murder of Sardar Joga Singh, a prominent and an affluent Dakhani Sikh who was then Chairman of the management of the college and also of the Nanak Jhira Sahib gurdwara. He was also decorated posthumously as Panth Rattan, a jewel of the Sikh community by the Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. Presently, Bidar does not have a large population of Dakhani Sikhs. Sikligar and Banjara Sikhs outnumber them though their population too is not large. The Sikligar households are largely confined to a congested settlement in Gandhi Nagar colony.

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Sikligars have been included in this study as part of Dakhani Sikhs though both of them –Dakhani and Sikligar– think each other different and do not have any social relations in terms of marriage etc. As mentioned above, they claim themselves to be the older residents of Deccan and around than the Dakhani Sikhs themselves since they came along the soldiers and supporters of Guru Gobind Singh who moved southwards in support of the Moghul Emperor. Sikligars as sword makers became Sikhs, who were originally tribal nomadic people doing the same job of sword making and polishing, *saiqal*, hence Sikligar. The ancestors of Sikligars have been converted to Sikh religion by the sixth Nanak Guru Harkrishan who donned the two swords of *miri* (temporal) and *piri* (spiritual) and organised an army

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224

of Sikhs to fight the Moghul darbar. Subsequently, the Sikligars scattered all over the southern states. They collect scrap from the junk yards where the metal equipment is dismantled. It is then worked upon by them and mostly the whole family is engaged in it doing different levels of work and then made into smaller pieces that are beaten and grinded to render a piece the shape of a knife or a cutter or something else. No polishing is required on these kitchen instruments that they make. Women and children too are engaged in some of these activities. Finally, the male head of the household or the son(s), load these on their cycles and move around selling and also repairing or mending the used items. (Also see below)

In Hyderabad metropolis they have the largest concentration because they are able to diversify their traditional occupation that is no longer in demand. Now they have diversified themselves in other kinds of iron works like making grills and gates. Some of them because of these skills have been able to seek employment in heavy metal industry as well. Traditionally they had also been making knives and vegetable-cutters and such like instruments for use in kitchen such as iron pans and also repairing them besides sword making which is no longer in demand. Rodamistry Colony, Balnagar, Subash Nagar, Kothapet in Dilsukh Nagar, Shamsabad, Guru Gobind Singh Colony (Ellamabanda) in the Kukatpally region of Ranga Reddy District are their citadels, the last one being the largest one in the whole of Deccan. Bahadur Singh, the president of the Sikh Sikligar Samaj tells that they had been making representations to the government time and again but it was only due to the interest of Surjit Singh Barnala, then governor of Andhra Pradesh from January 2003 to November 2004 that this housing colony consisting of 285 houses was approved for construction. A gurdwara with a large hall is under construction now besides a school for their children. The Secretary (FAC) writes to

Bahadur Singh in view of the letter from the Corporation: 'In view of the above, you are requested to contact directly to the Housing Corporation for allotment of houses in respect of Sikhlegar Community and concerned Executive Directors of A.P. State Minorities Finance Corporation at district levels for sanctioning of loans under Self Employment Schemes to them.' (Letter No. 34: 2008)

Nanded also has substantial population of this community where they had been engaged in their traditional occupation since swords remain in demand over there as it makes one of the important symbols and an outfit of the Singh Khalsa. During the celebrations of Hola Mohalla it is most in demand when not only the swords, *kirpans* and *khandas* etc. made by them are sold but they are also engaged in the polishing of the Guru's *shastaras* (weapons) that are displayed every evening after the *aarti*, besides those on special occasions like the gurgurab of Patshahi Dasvin and Hola Mohalla. But they lament that the industrially manufactured swords from Ludhiana have made an adverse impact on their trade and occupation. These swords are three times cheaper. The quality surely is not comparable to ours but people are interested in paying less for a sword for ceremonial purposes. The *pardhan* (president) of Sikh Sikligar Samaj at Nanded, Pujari Singh quipped: 'Those who know the meaning of sword and love to own it, definitely buy from us.'

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Earlier in their nomadic life they used to camp near towns and villages to perform these chores and move on to the next destination. Most of them still pursue their traditional occupation but do make a make-shift settlement and commute to their clients in a radius of about 10-15 kilometres on a bike that too is hired because they are not able to buy one.

The case of Manna Singh of Mortad describes the state and fate of the majority members of this community. He is sixty five years old who travels on a hired bike because he cannot afford to buy one. The day he hires bike he stays overnight on his *pheri* in the surrounding villages and towns. He has a way side *kulli* on the roadside in one corner of an open space where weekly vegetable market (*mandi*) is held on the panchayat land. His *kulli* is far removed from the structure of a hut in a tribal area that we are given in imagination in the school text books. The polythene cover is tattered and there are layers of covering materials of one kind and another to hold the rain water. The sheet covering sides has big holes. Two cots hold the household baggage that is removed at night to make space for the family's sleep. Two hens are also a part of the family besides a dog where he lives with his wife, a married son and his wife, and an unmarried younger son. It is pathetic.

The case of another Sikligar family at Nizamabad is worse still. Manna Singh at least has fresh air and open ground in the front while Kishan Singh has 33 members of his family living in a single room. One shudders at the very size of the number of inmates living in a single room. This is incredible India, '*Mera Bharat mahan*', more than sixty five years after independence.

The village Mortad is about 50 kms from Nizamabad on the state highway. It is a large village that happens to be the area of operation of Narayan Singh Mortad, a soldier of the Irregular Troops of Sikhs of the state of Hyderabad who rebelled against the Nizam and started Robbin Hooding. He looted the wealthy and helped the poor and the needy. A nearby hillock where he camped is named Narayan Singh Pahar. There are stories about his strength and chivalry. People hold that he lived amongst tigers and one of their dens was his resting place. The state police was terribly scared of him. Many expeditions were sent to arrest or kill him but in vain.

Finally, he was poisoned through a lady to whose house he used to visit sometimes for food. She was forced by the police to poison him. She was threatened with death if not listened to the police. It is said that when he was poisoned he came to know of it. First he killed her and later shot himself after taking a *chadar* (sheet) on himself as his coffin. People narrate that the dead Mortad was fired upon for an hour before 'capture'. His terror was so much that when his *chadar* fluttered due to wind, policemen would run away for their lives fearing he was alive. The naxalites or the Maoists of the region, however, keep him alive in their songs.

Banjaras:

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The tribal Banjaras especially of Maharashtra villages adjoining Nanded are taking to Sikhism quite enthusiastically. Most of the *kirtani jathas* in the Deccan gurdwaras including Takht Sach Khand at Nanded are of Banjara Singhs. Their religious grooming is done in a *taksal* at gurdwara Banda Ghat, Nanded though a smaller one also runs at Bidar. Presently there are 80 students at Nanded and 40 at Bidar and the majority is theirs though there are some from other states including from distant ones like Bihar. Some leave the course midway and become *pathis* while those who complete the course take to *kirtan* as well and form their own *jatha*. They are first generation converts who are happy with their decision of adopting Sikh religion and serving it.

Banjaras or Lambadas are the traditional nomadic tribes that specialised in the trade of salt, that is, *lavan* hence their name. *Vanaj* also means trade, hence Vanjara or Banjara that means a trader. According to the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Tribes and Castes Vol. 2*, Banjara term has numerous variations as 'Brinjara,

Lambadi, Lamane, Wanjara, Gohar, Herkeri (Carnatic) who are primarily grain and salt carriers, cattle-breeders and cattle dealers, found all over the Dominions... They have no settled homes, but lead a wandering life in bands... Their camp, comprising a large number of followers with their pack bullocks, is known as *tanda*.'

These people were also great suppliers of food and munitions to various armies including the great Moghuls. With the coming of the British, the nomadic tribes were declared criminal by the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 and were forcibly settled in the villages and outskirts of the towns. Many of them were sent to reformatories both industrial and agricultural so that once out from there, they should be able to earn their living settled at one place thus posing no threat to the law and order situation of the countryside and the country.

Banjaras of the Deccan too are the forced settlers who have gradually taken to agriculture. The scene of the small and marginal peasant in these states has worsened over the past few decades as also in many other parts of the country where these peasants are committing suicides. Banjara boys are adopting Sikhism though the rest of the family remains Hindu. These respondents informed that neither they are unhappy with their decision and the present occupation, nor their parents are objecting to it. It has been noticed in the field that Sikh Banjaras have motivated the members of their family and friends as well to follow them and reap the harvest of Sikhism to earn their bread and butter. It is worth repeating that most of the kirtani jathas in the gurdwaras of the south are of the Banjara Singhs. At Sach Khand Hazoor Sahib they have four out of seven jathas on roll there.

All Dakhani Sikhs claim to be *amritdhari* though many of them do not carry *kirpan* with them. Many of them are quite loose with the prescribed *rehat maryada*. They argue that those of us who have taken *khande di pahul* as we call *khande-baate da amrit* in Punjab, are strict in observing the code of conduct but those who partake *amrit* with *kirpan* can afford to be lax. Earlier the latter practice of partaking *amrit* with *kirpan* was confined to women only. Captain A.H. Bingley writes about the religious identity of Sikhs: 'The Dakhani Sikhs jealously preserved their religious and cultural identity, though they could not remain totally immune to local influences.'

The majority Dakhani Sikhs are far from affluent. They live in clusters of their own and most of them make slums of the worst kind. No doubt a few among them have risen the ladder of modernisation and development by dint of hard work and education but that is a minuscule minority. Their number is small enough to be counted on finger tips. The substantially large majority is given to eke out their living through governmental jobs of low status or small enterprises of their own. Many of the senior generation are drivers in the state transport or other government offices while most of the younger lot are auto or taxi drivers and do other odd jobs characteristic of lower socio-economic strata. Some also indulge in petty trading. It is however a recent trend since they always preferred service or job to business for which they have least disposition.

When one moves around them, as I had the opportunity of doing fieldwork for this project, one finds that cleavage between the Punjabi and Dakhani Sikhs is clear and sharp. No doubt they interact and extend cooperation to each other yet they do not take and give daughters in marriage. They have separate gurdwaras with own managements as well, but it is satisfying to note that they celebrate different gurpurabs at all important gurdwaras in Hyderabad allocated to them and participate

there collectively. For instance, gurdwara Gowliguda is under the management of Dakhani Sikhs that celebrates the gurpurab of the Guru Gobind Singh whereas the Gurdwara Singh Sabha at Secundrabad is with the Punjabi Sikhs who celebrate Guru Nanak's gurpurab on *katak purnima*, the birth anniversary of the guru. Another gurdwara at Ameerpet is also under the management of Dakhani Sikhs who celebrate the birth of Khalsa in April. It is called Baisakhi.

Dakhani Sikhs along with other Sikhs there observe gurpurabs and other occasions of Sikh religious significance with gusto and glamour such that other local people are simply wonderstruck at the high spirited enthusiasm and martial demeanours of the Sikh community. The local people are rather scared of them since they carry *kirpan* with them at all times and visibly too. They have *siri* sahibs (swords) at home that are brought out at the time of *nagar kirtans*, city processions on the holy days. The recently heightened pomp and show during city processions and the overflowing enthusiasm of the participants and the devotees, adds to the local's fear factor. Brandishing *siri* sahibs and other *shastars*, traditional as well as modern weapons, and the agility of *gatka* (Sikh martial art) players definitely scare the local populace. At Nanded the celebration of Holla Mohalla is a big occasion now where the enactment of offence and defence between two warring camps creates a real warlike situation. There is also a Halla Bol Chowk in the Nanded town where the whole drama is enacted annually after the festival of Holi. Holla Mohalla is a substitute of playing holi, the festival of colours initiated by Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur Sahib in Punjab.

Such warlike celebrations reinforce the strength and valour characteristic of the Sikh Forces of the earlier times when the very presence of a Sikh soldier in a village would deter the criminal from indulging in a criminal action. The Dakhani

Sikhs fondly narrate stories when the presence of an ordinary Sikh (not a soldier) generated confidence in the minds of the villagers when they had a threat from a *lootera* gang.

The history of the Sikh Irregular Troops has furthered the martial honour and prestige of the Sikhs amongst people. During the Nizam's period of anarchy, the Sikh soldiers were sent to accompany the officials for the collection of revenue as also from the defaulters. The personnel of the Sikh Force or Troops used to accompany the officers carrying valuables and currency from one place to another. These duties of the Sikh Troops became so entrenched in the peoples' minds that when a Sikh visited someone in a village, people surmised that he must have defaulted which is why the Sikh (Force) had come to him. Such awe and fear of the Sikhs is still fresh in peoples' memory.

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IS NOT
RELEVANT

This is of common occurrence in Hyderabad now where the prices of the land are skyrocketing, that the services of Dakhani Sikhs are solicited by those property owners whose plot or house has been taken forcibly under possession (*zabardasti kabza karna*) by some one. In the words of a Dakhani Sikh at Hyderabad: 'The owner hires the Sikhs, through friends of course, makes them a small daily wage of say Rs. 500/- only along with food and drinks and makes them sit at his plot. The opponent simply gives in. Their honesty and word are respected by the people as they do not demand excess knowing full well the real worth of the plot. And once they make a commitment, other party paying more money is not entertained.' He continues lamenting: 'Some amongst us only are exploiting the poorer ones for such purposes. They do not let them come up.'

Another interesting feature about Dakhani Sikhs is that they are peace loving people who do not unnecessarily fight with others though they do fight amongst themselves. It has happened once in the history of Nanded that there was a communal tension between them and the Muslims which was resolved by the timely state intervention and the judgement was given in favour of the Sikhs. It was over the issue of Gurdwara Maal Tekdi. It is believed that Guru Gobind Singh discovered treasure in a hillock there, got it excavated and distributed that among the army personnel of Bahadur Shah Zafar. This place is situated at a short distance from Nanded where a sufi saint's *dargah* (tomb) and mosque are close to the gurdwara. In Decmeber 1926 some miscreants demolished the gurdwara and buried a Muslim there to lay claim to the land. The dispute escalated into communal riots between the Muslims and the Sikhs. The Nizam of Hyderabad appointed a high power three member committee for independent inquiry. The verdict came in favour of the Sikhs and the bodies buried there were ordered to be exhumed. (For details see Nishter 2011)

The fondness of the Sikhs for *shastars* both traditional and modern and brandishing them valiantly during the *nagar kirtans* is nothing short of the Republic Day parade at Raj Path in Delhi displaying all the forces and the deadly weapons newly acquired by the Indian forces. The earlier martial legacy of the Sikhs is cashed upon by them still. Dakhani Sikhs (not Sikligars and Banjaras) though do not have surplus money but whatever little they have, is lent to the local people who are small traders or labourers at high rate of interest. It is quite paradoxical that those who do not have enough money with them indulge in financing. The riddle gets solved when the respondents inform that their money never gets sunk. Other people also attest it. In the words of a senior non-Sikh respondent at Nanded: 'Many

financiers' money gets forfeited but never that of a Sikh.' The fear of the Sikhs still prevails and no one dares to run away with their money, hence whatever little they have is loaned out. These are small money short term loans given on high rate of interest.

The Dakhani Sikhs also derive their honour and self-respect from their ancestors. They narrate proudly that their fore-fathers were so concerned about self-esteem that when the Nizam gave them the jagir of Nirmal for their excellent services to the state of Hyderabad, they rolled the said farman, an order of the government, inserted into the muzzle of a gun and blew that off, saying: 'We get salary from our Maharaja. He is our lord. Who is he (Nizam) to give us *jagir*?' It is maintained by the respondents that till the death of the Maharaja the salary of the Sikh Troops were paid from the Punjab treasury since 'the economic condition of the Nizam was not sound'. The past and the present thus reinforce each other. Each and every Dakhani Sikh, rich or poor alike, says that the Sikhs have maintained their glory till date. It is common utterance which is summed up in colloquial Punjabi by a young man of Nanded: '*Singhan da dabdba poora hai ji.*' And it is a result of this continuity of the past practices and of their reputation that lot many Sikhs indulge in money lending even today as there is least chance of forfeiture.

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Another interesting feature of the Dakhani Sikhs is the regular practice of *samuhik vivah*, group marriages that are carried once in the second week of May at Sikh Chhawniat, Hyderabad and twice at Hazur Sahib, Nanded in April and December. This time (on 13 May 2012) 22 couples tied their nuptial chords at Hyderabad. The number at Nanded is much larger as compared to Hyderabad. The practice here is on for the past more than a decade that was earlier performed at Gurdwara Gowliguda in the heart of the town. It is the one of the oldest gurdwaras in

Hyderabad that is solely managed by Dakhani Sikhs. For the lack of open space there and increase in traffic congestion, the venue of *samuhik vivah* has now been shifted to Gurdwara Barambala at Sikh Chhawaniat where not only the gurdwara has larger hall and space around it but also the Guru Nanak Girls school next door that accommodates all the couples and their parents and relatives for two to three days.

On day one engagements are solemnised while on the following day all couples are married, following the arrival of *barat* as usual the bridegroom on the horseback with *baand-baja*. The couples are then made to squat on the floor in gurdwara sahib in a semi-circle on numbered 'seats', the numbers they also wear on their shoulders. The *Anand Karaj* is performed in the customary way with the recitation of four *lavan*. Some noted priest and *kirtani jatha* solemnize the occasion. Since the Sikh community does not have the formal minority status and have no funds of their own, this function is organised under the auspices of Christian Minorities Welfare Association. A minister of the Andhra Pradesh government is also invited to grace the occasion. After the marriage ceremony *doli* is sent from the premises of the nearby Guru Nanak High School. *Langar* is also served to all present there. Each bride (not the bridegroom) is also handed over some household items like a television, a cycle and a sewing machine etc. worth Rs. 15,000/- only. This amount has been approved to be raised to Rs. 25,000/- from the next year, that is, 2013. The gurdwara management charges Rs. 4100/- per family for all expenses. The donations are also taken to make up the deficit for the above mentioned presents.

Earlier well off families too preferred *samuhik vivah* of their children for its simplicity and less expenses which is also a prescription of the Sikh religion. But now families given to the pomp and show off, get the marriage performed over there

and later host private reception that too is not expected of them. The management of the gurdwara and the Dakhani Sikhs Association forbid this practice but some families do so individually against the directive. It would not be wrong to suggest that the virus of glamour and show off characteristic of the Punjabi society has also infected these people lately who were otherwise given to simple and austere living.

Here also distinction between Sikligar Sikhs and Dakhani Sikhs is important.

The two communities keep social relations to themselves only. There are social and historical differences between them as well. These are two separate communities sociologically speaking. Dakhani Sikhs have married local women while the Sikligars marry in their own community, that is, the tribe. All tribal marriages practice tribal endogamy and gotra exogamy. Dakhani Sikhs are a progeny of the soldiers who prefer to take up a salaried post, government or private, but the Sikligars are given to their own traditional occupation which is still practised by them. Whatever diversification is taking place, it is limited to the allied metal works. The economic condition of the latter is worse than the former and so are their living conditions. The Sikligars are still nomadic and semi-nomadic to a large extent living on the outskirts of small towns or villages while the Dakhani Sikhs are solely urban residents. Another difference worth noticing is that besides the two communities having associations for their welfare like the Dakhani Sikhs Welfare Association and the Sikh Sikligar Samaj, the former have other associations as well to look after the cultural and educational associations as well. For instance, there is Sikh Heritage Foundation that keeps organising lectures, seminars and exhibitions related to Sikh religion and history at the Salar Jung Museum. There is Guru Ram Das Educational Guidance and Counselling Centre at the Central Gurdwara Gowliguda Sahib. There is also Guru Nanak Educational Trust managing the affairs of schools for boys and

girls. On the contrary Sikligars do not have such societies for their community. This is indicative of their distance from such modern practices necessary for social and economic development.

The discussion above shows that Sikhs who appear as a homogeneous community are not so at all. There are a variety of castes and classes amongst them, all castes characteristic of the Hindu society. But the Dakhani Sikhs are more close to the spirit of Sikh religion and philosophy in not disclosing their caste identity and most of them even do not know what is their caste or gotra though there are some who call themselves OBCs and Scheduled Castes as well. The Punjabi Sikhs are of khatri and peasant origin while the Sikligars and Banjaras or Lambadas are the Scheduled Tribes of the nomadic type. The focus of the present study is on the Dakhani and the tribal Sikhs who need attention of the Minorities Commission.

*It seems to emerge from the sense of inferiority that these people are given by the dominant Punjabi Sikhs. Theoretically there is justification in this feeling since in Sikhism there is no provision for such classification and every one irrespective of one's caste, class or creed is a Sikh without any hierarchy and stratification.

Chapter III

AXOMIYA AND OTHER SIKHS IN THE NORTH-EAST

As mentioned in the 'Introduction', the Sikh people had first moved into Assam with Guru Tegh Bahadur in the second half of the seventeenth century. There is no authentic information in this respect as to who are the descendants of such Sikhs and where are they. The migration streams started later with the colonisation of Assam in 1826 following the Treaty of Yandabo. The imperial colonisation of this region boosted the Sikh migration from Punjab first as mechanics and carpenters, specifically the Ramgharia. The industrial and other infra-structural developments like laying of road and rail lines was a boost to migration. This encouraged the tea planters and other investors in wood and oil that further attracted the Sikhs to migrate to Assam. Tea plantation was a big boost in the migration of labour from Bihar, Chhatisgarh and Jharkhand etc. and of mechanics and other skilled labour from Punjab. The Bengalis also made huge migration looking after the administration of industry, tea plantations and the government offices too.

There are similarities between the two regions –Deccan and the North-East– and also the Sikhs there. Like in the Deccan, there are also three types or categories of Sikhs in the North-East (NE), one, the Axomiya Sikhs who have rural base and are agriculturist by occupation unlike the Dakhani Sikhs who are primarily urban based and do no agriculture. The second type is the *safai karmacharis* of the NE with no parallel in the Deccan. The third type like that in the Deccan is that of the Punjabi Sikhs who as entrepreneurs moved over the last few decades for business.

The khatri Sikhs take to retail and wholesale business where as those with peasant background called Jutt Sikhs, take to transport and auto spare parts business.

Like in the Deccan the last category does not qualify for this study sponsored by the National Commission for Minorities since they are economically well off and do not deserve any sort of social or economic reservation. Thus we are left with the Axomiya Sikhs and the *safai karamcharis* who need assistance from the government and other welfare organisations for their economic backwardness. Both of these categories are interesting on their own account.

Axomiya Sikhs:

As narrated above they are the progeny of the contingent of about 300 while some say 500 Sikh soldiers who were sent by Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab to support the Ahom king against the Burmese invasion. H.K. Barpujari mentions that 'In 1820, it is said, five hundred Sikh soldiers came from Punjab at the instance of Ranjit Singh for fighting against the Burmese in favour of king Chandrakanta Singha. The commander of the soldiers was a Sikh Chaitanya Singh.' (1994: 242) A.C. Bannerjee, however, is silent about Chandrakanta Singha soliciting help from Sikhs (Ranjit Singh) and others against the Burmese invasion. But this is acceptable to all that during the second decade of the nineteenth century the Ahom kingdom was getting weakened due to its internal contradictions. Chandrakanta Singha's army got defeated and Chaitanya Singh the Sikh commander was killed in the battle that was fought at Hadira Chowki in the district of Goalpara. Escaping the wrath of the mighty forces of Burma they moved into the forests and finally settled at Chaparmukh, about 40 kms from the town of Nagaon that is the district headquarters too and then

at Barkola at a distance of about 20 kms from there, the latter being the largest settlement of the Axomiya Sikhs now. The gurdwaras constructed over the two places –Chaparmukh and Barkola– bear the years of their establishment as 1820 and 1825 respectively.

B.C. Allen also writes in the *Assam Gazetteer* of 1905:

The Sikhs are the descendants of soldiers who came for service to Assam about 1825 or a little later. The original settlers have inter married with Kewats, Koches, and Kalitas, and all, except the latest arrivals from the Punjab, have now an admixture of Assamese blood. The majority have taken to agriculture but their community includes a few carpenters and contractors. They are found in the Singaon and Hatipara villages in the sadr tehsil and at Chaparmukh. (Allen 1905: 95)

Contrary to the contentions of those suggesting that Sikhs married low caste women, Brinchi Kumar Medhi who did his thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) on the Barkola Sikhs mentions that they married Keots, a respectable agriculture caste, higher in caste hierarchy and Kalitas, just lower to Brahmins but an agriculturist caste. (Medhi 1989: 65) Dimbeswar Neog too mentions: 'That the Kalitas were always an imposing and leading people for their culture...' and adds a critical account of a foreign observer: ' "The original inhabitants of the country of two races – the Assamese (i.e. Ahoms) and the Kalitas. In all things the latter are superior to the former." ' (Neog 1947: 186)

The Sikh commander Chaitanya Singh died along with most of his soldiers and lost the war. The surviving ones, including the wife of the commander escaped death and after travelling through the interiors of the forested territory reached

Chaparmukh. A gurdwara was constructed there in 1820 by the commander's wife that is now called Gurdwara Mata Ji. She is believed to have taken the command in her hand and fought valiantly after the death of her commander husband. She was a religious and pious lady who used to grind flour for herself and the family with a pair of grinders that is now preserved in the gurdwara as a relic of the past. Besides, it has two guns and a sword that belonged to her. Very recently the swords have been stolen while other relics are preserved under lock and key in the main hall of the gurdwara where lies the Guru Granth Sahib, the *maharaj prakash*. Chaparmukh is a large village that has a railway station since it falls on the rail route from Raha to Lumding and Dabaka through Kampur and Hojai. Presently it does not have a large Sikh population. The land is also not good for agriculture hence people have migrated out to other towns like Nagaon and Lanka for better prospects of earning their livelihoods.

Barkola is the only village in the whole of North-East that has the largest Sikh population. There are three schools including a higher secondary school, a polytechnic, a naam ghar, a community hall, Guru Nanak Shankar College, Guru Nanak Library etc. It has three gurdwaras including the oldest one established in 1825 called Puratan Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara. The original old structure made of wood and tin sheets is now used as a godown and langar hall while the new one made of concrete and marble is still under construction. There is another gurdwara that is also claimed to be an old (*puratan*) one that belongs to the descendants of Ram Singh who stay at Nagaon, the district headquarters. The third and the youngest one is called Gurdwara Nanaksar that was constructed in 1986. It lies on the main road from Nagaon to Kampur while the older ones are in the interior of the village though not farther from the road. Three young men of the village had

laid their lives during the Assam Movement launched by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) in the 1980s. Two of them were Sikhs Shaheed Chandan Singh and Karam Singh. A memorial is also under construction on the main road to Kampur.

The Sikhs who call themselves Axomiya are truly local in the sense they are born and brought up here and Axomiya is their mother tongue which is quite an authentic index of a person's nativity. According to those of the community who claim to represent them and are contesting their rights and claims at some level, the very definition of an Axomiya is that one should not only be born here (in Assam) but her mother tongue should be Axomiya too. They need to press upon this dimension of nativity to neutralise the politics of the Punjabi Sikhs who now claim to represent the Sikhs in Assam. The original Axomiya Sikhs are in fact the descendants of the Sikh soldiers who lost the war and settled here. They know no other language but Axomiya or Assamese. Those who have moved out of the village and have schooling or are working in some office know Hindi as well and others with higher qualification understand English too. From these two villages they spread out for earning a livelihood or for studies and employment to other places like Nagaon, Lanka and to smaller places like Bebejia and Hatipara etc.

In the words of a historian of Punjab and Sikhs, Himadri Banerjee holding the chair of Guru Nanak Professor of Indian History at Jadavpur University, Kolkata:

Except their turban and beard, the Assamese Sikh male folk can hardly be distinguished from the rest of the Assamese population. "Even the lady of the house looks like just any other Assamese married woman – adorned with *sindhoor* (vermillion) and clad in *mekhala-chaddar*, the traditional Assamese dress." Her language, food, daily work schedule,

social response, community celebrations, etc. come to her Assamese neighbour, that one would often find it difficult to demarcate the domain of one from the other. ...These local Sikhs are so intimately acquainted with the roots of Assamese culture that their claim of being *hare himjue Assamiya* (hundred per cent Assamese) does not appear a false assertion. (Banerjee 2006: 106-7)

One conspicuous feature of Axomiya Sikhs is their ignorance of Punjabi language which appears an anomaly to Sikhs from Punjab (see conclusion) since Punjab, Punjabi and Sikhism are manifestly tied together so much so that someone living in Punjab may not speak Punjabi but it is not expected from a Sikh. All the Axomiya Sikhs being the descendants of soldiers are a progeny of mixed lineage – Punjabi and Axomiya. The soldiers married local women whose children and their children spoke and grew up with Axomiya, thus in the village where there is no chance of grooming the language of an outsider, the future generation of Sikhs lost touch with Punjabi language and culture. It is not a slur on them. It was the socio-historical conjuncture that led to these developments and there was no other existential choice for them, the soldiers then. Following agriculture as means of subsistence and located in villages farther from the towns left them with no option of encountering other languages including Punjabi, hence their expertise in Axomiya only. It may not be out of place to mention that these villages are about 130 kms from Guwahati the only bustling metropolis of the NE.

These Sikhs are well immersed in local culture and language of the region. Nand Singh, an officer in the Assam Police got the 2012 Award of the Sahitya Academy, New Delhi for his contributions to Axomiya literature. He writes poetry and short stories in Axomiya and has authored about fifteen books. Bhupen Singh, a

retired principal of the Pragjyotish College in Guwahati has also translated some sacred texts of Granth Sahib like Japji and Sukhmani Sahib etc. in Axomiya. Besides these Sikhs contributing to the Axomiya literature, there are few others who rose to superior positions in education and administration but their number is small enough to be counted on finger tips.

Pritam Singh, a descendant of Ram Singh was teaching political science at the Nagaon College. He is also the president of the Axomiya Sikh Association with head office at Nagaon. Amarjit Singh is presently teaching political science at a college in Lanka. There was one Deputy Inspector General of Assam police. LP Singh is working as senior bank manager at Guwahati while Nand Singh is Additional Superintendent of Assam Police at Kokrajhar, to name a few prominent ones from the community. **Some** of them are also active in the state politics. One from Barkola was in the higher offices of the Assam Gana Sangram Parishad of Prafulla Kumar Mahanta who formed the state government and became the chief minister of Assam. Some are also active in Indian National Congress as well.

Safai karamcharis:

Besides Axomiya Sikhs there are other type of Sikhs who may be clubbed with them for the purposes of this project who have been residing in the NE for the last about one century and are found only in Guwahati/Dispur in Assam and Shillong in Meghalaya. Their parents were brought by the British army from Punjab when they made Shillong the headquarters of colonial administration to keep check on the restive tribes of the region and to make secure the working of the tea estates in Assam. It was not easy to maintain effective control over them from distant Calcutta.

244

Shillong was then capital of Assam and now that of Meghalaya carved out of Assam in 1972. These people are concentrated at two colonies there called Barra Bazar and the Gora Line in Laitumkhrah.

It is said that the army battalion that moved there was earlier located in Punjab and they wanted some people to do the menial job of cleaning their offices and town etc. They brought the Scheduled Caste Sikhs called Mazhabis from Punjab for employment in the secretariat and the municipal committee. Their settlements were then on the periphery of the colonial settlement but now these are in the thick of population. Locally they are called Punjabis. The formation of Meghalaya as a separate state carved out from Assam in 1972 led to the dislocation of these Punjabis. Those working with the civil secretariat of Assam moved to Guwahati and Dispur in particular that made the new capital. Their clustering of houses is close to the secretaria in Dispur called the Last Gate Colonyt. In Guwahati they are concentrated at Marakhali close to the Nehru Stadium and are scattered at some other places like Fatasil and Reshabari etc.

The residents of the two capital towns are also interrelated socially and culturally since they belong to the same caste and occupation. The exchange of women takes place both ways which is why they have strong familial bonds. These people belong to two districts of Punjab that is, Amritsar and Gurdaspur. In our survey we could find none from other than these two places. They are still strongly connected to their native districts in Punjab so much so that talking to them one may notice clearly their Majhaili accent and one wonders if one is sitting in a house at Shillong and Guwahati/Dispur or in Amritsar or Gurdaspur.

The *safai karamcharis* of Shillong (Meghalaya) and of Guwahati/Dispur can also pass for the locals for their long duration of residence but are not allowed that status by the powers that be especially in Meghalaya where they are declared as outsiders by the natives, the Khasis. They had been there for the past about hundred years yet there is ambivalence about their residential status. They are not allowed to purchase property/land still despite being residents there before the nation-state of India came into existence. Himadri Banerjee, a historian writes about them:

It is difficult to suggest any specific year pointing out the presence of Mazhbis there. As *safai karamcharis*, by the late 1910s they were already on the payroll of the local municipality, which had come into existence in 1910. It is likely that they were employed in its Conservancy Department through the recommendation of one of the British regiments then posted in Shillong cantonment area. Local sources suggest that in the early twentieth century, a small group of Mazhbis were first brought to Shillong by a British military regiment that had earlier served in the Punjab. (Banerjee 2012: 6)

Barra Bazar is now in the heart of Shillong, what is called downtown in the modern parlance where the Punjabis have the largest concentration of more than 500 households though the number of houses is about 250. The houses are built on both sides of the main road on a hilly terrain, the upper side being the older one having a gurdwara and a temple nearby. All along the road on both sides are the small shops which are better termed as large booths, given their size with all sorts of items being sold there from furniture to grocery and stationary including electronic

items and repair shops etc. Barra Bazar also has a Guru Nanak School that has about 250 students on rolls in June 2012.

The houses are also badly packed with small rooms over stuffed with items of use. The winding alleys are small and narrow where it is difficult for two persons to cross each other. Initially the settlement was not that bad and congested but over the years, as a result of the enlargement of family and marriages of sons has generated the need for more accommodation. Since there is no provision to buy land or house in Shillong the residents are left with no option but to build within that space and also encroach as much upon the street or whatever land is available around the house. For instance, there were only three barracks with eight houses each at Gora Line meant for that number of families to begin with but presently there are 143 households living at the same space. One can imagine the extent of congestion there. It is not an isolated instance of Gora Line but all of their localities at all places in Assam and Meghalaya. The situation is rather worse at Barra Bazar being the hub of city. Marakhali at Guwahati and the Last Gate Colony at Dispur are no better. The urban and municipal administration has declared all of these slums. If purchasing a house or land is not prohibited at Guwahati, there is no space around their locality where they may expand. Moreover the prices of land and property are exorbitantly prohibitive that these *safai karamcharis* and their younger generation cannot dare to afford.

Barra Bazar settlement along with Gora Line at Laitumkhrah is not worthy of living by any standards. The Urban Affairs Department of Shillong has drawn plans to relocate the residents of these slums for the beautification of the city. Houses small though, that were meant for a family, have become congested over the years due to enlargement of families. There are rooms within rooms virtually so much so

that many households perform the cuisine chores and of laundry in the street itself. There are more than 300 households at Barra Bazar and about 160 households at Gora Line. The same is the case at Marakhali in Guwahati and Dispur. It is not only the problem of bad housing now but also the hardwork their ancestors were doing under harsh working conditions. Himadri Banerjee narrates the ordeal these *safai karamcharis* undertook:

The workforce included different categories of menial employees, most of whom were probably retained as sweepers. They were asked to clean some of the major thoroughfares of the city and pick up waste from the side gullies and drains. Another group was engaged in carrying night soil and ensuring its disposal at the central depot. They formed a reliable army of sweepers and sewage cleaners for keeping the city clean. It is likely that there would be a few minor variations in their wage rates. It remained an endless issue for many of them to satisfy the upper echelon of the municipality, which levied many complaints against them. One was the slow speed of transporting urban waste to the disposal depot beyond the city limits. This was largely due to the long, meandering journey that the bullock carts carrying waste had to take during the early hours of the day. Besides, the adjoining hilly terrain and the uneven road surface made matters even worse. (Banerjee 2012: 7)

Another common factor between these Punjabis at both the capital towns is that since these are prime locations, the builders and administrators have their eyes on these settlements. Over the last three decades, these people have been threatened with eviction umpteen times that they had been resisting till date. The Shillong Municipal Corporation and the ministry of urban affairs have also given

them alternative accommodations where the residents are not willing to shift since these housing complexes are farther from their place of work. The Urban Affairs Department of Shillong has drawn elaborate plans to beautify the downtown, planning flyovers and parking lots to ease the congestion there but these people are not willing to shift given the strategic location.

But the Guwahati Municipal Corporation has succeeded in its project of beautifying the interior of the town by constructing two seven storey complexes at Marakhali, close to the Nehru Stadium and allotting one room flats to all the residents at that very site only. The vertical housing complexes shall vacate the land for other development purposes or at least will beautify the space. The Barra Bazar residents are also asking the Shillong administration to follow the Guwahati MC which is not acceptable to the authorities for 'technical reasons', as they put.

The local residents are doubtful of the administration's plans for alternative housing because the dominant Khasi tribes people keep calling them outsiders and their youth often have skirmishes on this count when the Punjabis are teased as 'outsiders'. These incidents occur quite often though they have never escalated to a major riot as it happened in the month of March 2012 when the local administration including the police and the local MLA were on the side of the Khasis or *Khasia* and *Khasiye* (in plural) so addressed by the Punjabis. They believe that the administration's move to settle them elsewhere is only a ploy to evict them not from Barra Bazar and Gora Line but from Shillong itself. The Punjabis are very sore on this count that despite their presence there for about a century, they cannot call themselves 'local' and they are discriminated by the administration at various levels and in many ways, so allege the residents of these areas.

This ambivalence causes heart burning in them. Should they settle here? That they can not. Should they return to Punjab? Which is also not an easy proposition since they have been out from there for generations. Most of them do not have land or house there to bank on and they have not enough money to start a business though small. Here they have something to fall back on. Their children do not want to go back to Punjab given the facilities and life style at Shillong. But they cannot permanently settle here as buying property is not allowed. This is the dilemma that this generation of elders is confronted with especially those who are either about to retire from service or have already retired. Thus they tend to shuttle between the two ends of the country, their ancestral home and the present one. Under such circumstances they keep sticking to the place especially the elders who wish to 'return' but cannot. The jobs for them are also becoming difficult because the local people are now willing to take up this work and populist politics comes to their help – 'No jobs for outsiders.' The administration too follows this policy covertly.

These Sikh Punjabis do not lag behind in replying to any threat from the local people – verbal or physical. A 'befitting' reply is given to them on each occasion, as all of them claim. Whenever there is some brawl they take out their kirpans and teach the miscreants a lesson. An educated young man who plies a taxi remarks: '*Je asin na boliye o' chha jaan ge. Hun saare sidhe keete hoye ne. Khalse agge koi nahin bolda.*' Literally put, they will dominate if you do not retaliate, now all of them have been streamlined and no one dares to stand up against the Khalsa.

The Barra Bazar Association has Billoo Singh as president and Gurjit Singh, an *amritdhari* Sikh who is also the Principal of the Guru Nanak School there, as the secretary. They have filed a suit in the High Court that this land belongs to them since the then Syiem of that area had given it to them for their settlement. The

association has been able to get hold of that document and the decision is pending. They had also been making representations to various agencies like the National Commission for Minorities, National Human Rights Commission and the Home Ministry etc. for their alleged discrimination and victimisation but no positive development has happened so far.

The administration has a different take on these residents. The different officers on separate occasions have informed during their interviews. Their views are best summed up by the director of the Urban Affairs Department of Shillong: 'Barra Bazar residents indulge in all sorts of anti-social activities like gambling, prostitution etc. Even the police do not enter their area out of fear. On the other hand, the residents of Gora Line are simple and sincere. They listen to you.' A local NGO had filed a complaint to this effect and a threat to the law and order situation in the city. The inquiry was conducted by the Assistant Commissioner of Shillong.

The residents of these areas –Barra Bazar and Gora Line at Shillong and at Dispur and Marakhali (Guwahati) are all Mazhabi Sikhs, hence a gurdwara is inevitably constructed at each locality yet there is a Balmik temple because they are harijans, the Scheduled Castes. There is no discrimination by the residents in the celebration of gurpurabs and other occasions of Sikh religious importance at the gurdwara and also of celebrating Balmik jayanti at the temple. All of them go to each place with equal respect upholding the Gandhian principle of *sarva dharma sambhava*. Apart from the Sikhs there are a few Punjabi Christians too but their number is quite small. Some of them were already Christian converts when they migrated from Punjab but not many. Some of the younger generation have taken to Christianity relatively recently since it is the dominant religion there and Christian organisations are quite forthcoming in offering welfare measures and help to the

members of their community. They are only making hay in the shining sun of Christianity at Shillong. This phenomenon is not observed at Dispur and Guwahati since there is no predominance of any religion.

Punjabi Sikhs:

Like in Deccan the Punjabi Sikhs in the NE too are entrepreneurs who belong to two castes/communities, the trading and the peasantry. The former came after the Partition in 1947 or even after and aggressively indulged in the retail and wholesale trade in the city especially. They belong to the trading castes of the united Punjab. The Fancy Bazar gurdwara, in the heart of Guwahati is the oldest one whose management is now with them though initially it vested with the Ramgharias. Second type of Punjabi Sikhs with the background of peasantry came to these far flung places for business in transport and auto-parts over the last few decades. Some of them own a fleet of trucks especially.

Beltola in Guwahati is the citadel of such entrepreneurs and there is a big gurdwara whose management is also under their control. Now they are spreading their tentacles to control the management of the Fancy Bazar gurdwara that is yet not under them. They consider themselves superior to all other types of Sikhs, the local Sikhs including the Sikh traders that are there in the whole of NE. The money power that they have is making them take control of all gurdwaras and associations that have some political clout or at least has that potential. The famous historical gurdwara Damdama Sahib at Dhubri at a distance of about 350 kms from Guwahati is also under their control.

Till date the relations between them and the Axomiya Sikhs had been cordial but with increasing economic interests and the tendency amongst them to wield political power, they are using these means for being the sole spokes persons of the Sikh community in the NE thus the need to capture the gurdwara as a foremost religious institution symbolising the solidarity and cohesiveness of the Sikh community, hence a significant political clout.

A brief historical overview of their relationship is illustrative of the emerging schisms between them. The Assamese Sikh Association was initially launched by the Axomiya Sikhs trying to articulate their presence and to obtain certain rights due to them as a minority community there. Over the years there has occurred a split and the one belonging to the Punjabi Sikhs is assuming importance. Its headquarters are at Guwahati where as that of the Axomiya Sikhs is at Nagaon. Pritam Singh is the president currently.

In the days of solidarity the Assamese Sikh Association has decided to celebrate the *gurpurab* of Guru Tegh Bahadur in April at Dhubri whose management is under the control of Punjabi Sikhs and the *shaheedi purab* of the same Guru at Mata Ji's gurdwara at Chaparmukh in December. This was the formal decision and was followed each year whereby the whole Sikh *sangat* from the whole of NE would attend these functions and celebrate the occasions collectively. For the first time in the history of the NE Sikhs, two parallel functions have been organised in December 2012. According to a senior activist of the Axomiya Sikhs: 'We were forced to take this hard decision by the high headedness of the Punjabi Sikhs who violated the code last year by holding the parallel function at Dhubri when it was our turn at

Chaparmukh.' Further: 'We had always been cooperating with them and abiding by the collective decisions but they are becoming arrogant and rude.' 'The Axomiya Sikhs also hold the view that Punjabi Sikhs do not hold a good opinion of them. A leading representative of their community remonstrates: 'They hold us in low esteem. They have money hence they think they are better Sikhs. Now they call themselves Assamese Sikhs.'

The above discussion makes clear that there are a variety of Sikhs that do not make a homogeneous community by any parameters of socio-economic criteria. There are Sikhs belonging to all major castes of the Hindu society like khatris, peasants, the OBCs especially the Ramgharias and the Scheduled Castes belonging to the Punjabi (the *safai karamcharis*) and the Axomiya Sikhs both. But the genuinely called Axomiya Sikhs who are the focus of the present study are those who have been the progeny of those Sikhs that came to their region two hundred years ago. And they are primarily the residents of Nagaon district in Assam. These Sikhs are not aware of their caste and gotra even that are not at all displayed against their names.

Chapter IV

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE SIKHS IN THE NORTH-EAST AND THE DECCAN

The previous two chapters have highlighted the socio-historical background of the Sikh communities settled in the NE and the Deccan. It is now pertinent to describe their socio-economic and cultural profile for the benefit of the governmental agencies and others who may wish to dole out certain welfare measures to them. This chapter will lay bare the economic and other material living conditions of the Sikhs at two places in two different corners of the country. Besides this description of their profile, it will also dispel many doubts and whims about their society and culture such that they have been labelled as 'duplicate' or '*kachae*' Sikh that is half-baked Sikhs.

A total of 1011 Sikh households have been surveyed in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka with focus on Dakhani and Axomiya Sikhs. Let me state that for the convenience of discussion and for the benefit of reader as well, we shall club the respondents under two heads as belonging to the North-East (NE) and the Deccan. The justification for the latter has already been mentioned in the 'Introduction'. The NE has 540 households and the Deccan 471 that make 53.41 per cent and 46.59 per cent respectively. Of these 313 (30.96 per cent) households fall in the lowest income group of Rs. 5,000 per month and below, 439 (43.42 per cent) in the middle group from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 14,000 per month and the highest one of more than Rs. 14,000 per month has 259 (25.62 per cent) households.

The total population of the sample households is 4955, out of which 2342 are from the NE and the remaining 2613 hail from the Deccan. The gender composition of this population is 2330 females and 2625 males. Of the latter 1242 are in the NE and 1383 in the Deccan. The female population is 1100 and 1230 respectively.

Table 1: Demographic Parameters

Parameters	Total	Region	
		Assam	Dakhan
Total Population	4955	2342	2613
Male	2625	1242	1383
Female	2330	1100	1230
No. of Households	1011	540	471
Average family Size	4.90	4.34	5.55
Average Age	29.03	30.28	27.9

The average **size of the family** is well within the normatively stipulated number of 4.90 persons though there is an exceptional case of a Sikligar family in the Deccan that has 33 members to it. The average size is lower in the NE with 4.34 members than the Deccan with 5.55 members. The age of the respondents is also an indicator of the qualitative character of the population, its productivity and gumption. The average age is not high, that is, 29.03 years. If the size of family is small in the NE, the average age is higher (30.28 years) there than in the Deccan (27.90 years).

After browsing through the demographic parameters of the sample population it is useful to look into its **educational statistics**. Education is a crucial factor in the modern society since it improves the quality of the respondent's life chances in

terms of employment and productiveness besides affecting the quality of each and every aspect of her life. It is thus important to gloss over the broad contours of the data in this respect. Of the total 4955 persons, largest share goes to the matric and primary level of education with 1432 (28.90 per cent) and 1393 (28.11 per cent) persons respectively. The number of graduates is 323 (6.52 per cent) and that of the post graduates is further lower, 50 (1.01 per cent) only. It is dismally low for the population that is largely not only urban but also metropolitan, that is, in and around Hyderabad and Guwahati/Dispur. Shillong too is a capital city in hills of the NE where there is no dearth of quality educational institutions following the legacy of the colonial regime. The illiterates too have a larger share with 996 persons constituting 20.10 per cent of the sample population.

Table 2: Education Statistics

Education Level	Total		Assam		Dakhan	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Illiterate	996	20.10	242	10.33	754	28.86
Below 5th	761	15.36	292	12.47	469	17.95
Primary	1393	28.11	844	36.04	549	21.01
Matric	1432	28.90	827	35.31	605	23.15
Graduate	323	6.52	137	5.85	186	7.12
Post Graduate	50	1.01	0	0.00	50	1.91
	4955	100	2342	100	2613	100

The regional variations are quite significant. The population in the NE is much ahead of its counterpart in the Deccan in certain respects. The number of those with matric and primary level education is almost similar, that is, 35.31 per cent and 36.04 per cent in the NE while the corresponding figures in the Deccan are 23.15

per cent and 21.01 per cent respectively. The number of graduates and post graduates is higher in the Deccan, 7.12 per cent and 1.91 per cent respectively as compared to those in the NE which is 5.85 per cent and zero per cent. There is not a single post graduate in the NE where the sample population is at a higher pedestal at the school level education. It is simply paradoxical. But it may be due to the early employability in the NE. The Deccan leads the levels of percentage both at the primary level of education and those who are illiterate. The two figures are 17.95 per cent and 28.86 per cent respectively in the Deccan compared to 12.47 per cent and 10.33 per cent respectively in the NE.

Of the total 1011 Sikh households, 540 have been surveyed in Assam and Meghalaya with focus on Guwahati/Dispur and the district of Nagaon, and Shillong that have larger concentration of Sikhs out of which 88.33 per cent households are headed by the males and the remaining 11.67 per cent by the females. The corresponding figures in the Deccan area are 92.14 per cent and 7.86 per cent out of a total of 471 households whose larger share falls in the metropolis of Hyderabad and its suburbs. Nanded in Maharashtra has the second largest population of the Dakhani Sikhs including Sikligars whose presence is definitely significant in Hyderabad compared to other places. For the total sample of 1011 households, 90.11 per cent households have male heads and 9.89 per cent have female heads.

It suggests that a female does not take the command of the house under normal circumstances but only in the absence of an effectively earning male member of the household and there is hardly any effect of the socio-cultural or regional variation on this aspect of the household in India. But when this variable is related to income, it upholds the popular perception that lower the income, higher is the percentage of female heads of households. In this sample the proportion of male

heads rises with rise in income levels. The households with income of up to Rs. 5,000 only per month report 84.35 per cent households with male heads. This figure jumps to 90.43 per cent as income rises to 14,000 per month and to 96.53 per cent for households beyond the previous level. Conversely, 15.65 per cent households in the first income group have female heads that falls to 9.57 per cent and 3.47 per cent respectively as income levels increase.

When we look at the **age structure** of the heads of the household in the total sample of 1011 it is found that 14.34 per cent heads of the households are young, up to 30 years and the rest are falling in the higher age group. 28.78 per cent fall between 30-40 years, 27.00 per cent between 40-50 years and 29.87 percent in the 50 years and more. It shows that the decennial age structure at three levels from 30 to 50 years and above has almost similar percentage of heads of households. A relation with income shows interesting results. The three income levels have least effect on the average age of the heads of households between 30-50 years which falls for the age group of up to 30 years and rises for the last group of 50 years and more. For the respondents with less than 40 years of age the number falls with increase in income levels from Rs. 5,000 per month to Rs. 14,000 and more while it remains constant at all the three levels for the age group 40-50 years while those above 50 years register a jump from 19.17 per cent to 42.86 per cent heads of households as income rises from the first to the third level.

259

Table 3: Age group (years)

Group/Sub Group	Up to 30		30-40		40-50		Above 50	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region								
1. N.E	51	9.44	175	32.41	152	28.15	162	30.00
2. Dakhan	94	19.96	116	24.63	121	25.69	140	29.72
Income Group (Th)								
1. Up to 5	71	22.68	100	31.95	82	26.20	60	19.17
2. 5-14	41	9.34	143	32.57	124	28.25	131	29.84
3. Above 14	33	12.74	48	18.53	67	25.87	111	42.86
ALL DATA								
All Data	145	14.34	291	28.78	273	27.00	302	29.87

The inter-regional variations are also not significant except only at the first level of up to 30 years. In the NE it is lower at 9.44 per cent heads of households while the corresponding figure in the Deccan is 19.96 per cent, meaning thereby that larger number of households in the Deccan have younger heads compared to the NE. For the 30 to 50 years group onwards the gap between the regions narrows and is completely decimated when it reaches the last category of 50 years and above. There is no difference at all. Both regions record 29.87 per cent heads of households, specifically 30.00 per cent in the NE and 29.72 per cent in the Deccan.

The **caste composition** of the heads of the sample households is skewed which is of course an anomaly in Sikh society since the Sikh religion and philosophy do not permit or prescribe caste stratification, rather it demolishes this age old system of Hinduism. Guru Nanak along with other *bhaktas* (in Hindi) or *bhagats* (in Punjabi) of the fifteenth and sixteenth century had vociferously condemned and debunked caste system in harshest terms. All the subsequent Sikh gurus made their own contributions in this regard of eradicating caste system by establishing gurdwaras and such other practices of *sangat*, *pangat* and *langar* etc. The tenth

(260)

master Guru Gobind Singh finally created the Khalsa of *amritdhari* Sikhs, a brotherhood of people irrespective of any caste, class or creed.

It has to be a society of militant people ever ready and willing to fight against any kind of domination and oppression both in society and politics. All men who take *amrit* are given the suffix 'Singh' and women 'Kaur' in lieu of their surnames or caste designations. This was a well thought out and planned strategy of the Sikh gurus to establish equality and justice in the caste divided Indian Society. Unfortunately despite all the efforts of the Sikh Gurus and their attempts to institutionalise these principles of Sikh religion and philosophy in various ways for a just society have been set aside over the years. These principles have been overpowered by the age old caste system of Hinduism. Thus we practically have all the castes amongst Sikhs as we find in the larger Indian Hindu society both in Punjab as well as outside.

Table 4: Caste

Group/Sub Group	General/Sikh		SC/ST		Sikligar		OBC		Others	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region										
1. N.E	253	46.85	281	52.04					6	1.11
2. Dakhan	261	55.41	10	2.12	179	38.00	11	2.34	10	1.83
Income Group (Th)										
1. Up to 5	130	41.54	58	18.53	111	35.46	4	1.28	10	3.2
2. 5-14	245	55.81	130	29.61	55	12.53	6	1.37	3	0.68
3. Above 14	139	53.67	103	39.77	13	5.02	1	0.39	3	1.16
ALL DATA										
All Data	514	50.84	291	28.78	179	17.71	11	1.09	16	1.58

What we want to observe in the present study is the theory and practice of Sikh religion and philosophy at a place distant from Punjab where the Sikhs could live on their own and by themselves without being pressurised by the other communities in competition with each other for other reasons. Thus it is of interest to know if these respondents could practise Sikh religion and philosophy in letter and

spirit and to what extent? What difficulties do they encounter in their pursuits etc.? Such are a few of the relevant questions put to the respondents in this regard. Caste is fundamental in this respect because with this are attached the nature and type of occupation and social status of an individual. A look at the caste table shows all the important castes in the Sikh society at both the places of the present study – NE and the Deccan. For convenience we club these into general, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). It is a regional feature that majority respondents in the NE characterise themselves as 'general' and those in the Deccan as 'Sikh'. For purposes of tabulation and analysis we have clubbed them under general category. The tribal people too are there in the sample though they remain outside the caste fold. Thus we have 50.84 per cent general caste or Sikh, 28.78 per cent Scheduled Castes, 18.41 per cent Scheduled Tribes that is, Sikligar, Banjara or Lambada and 1.59 per cent Other Backward Classes.

Interestingly, the question of one's caste draws two inferences in the two regions. In the NE there is clear cut polarisation between the general and the Scheduled Castes, the latter being 52.04 per cent and the former 44.07 per cent respectively. Interestingly 2.78 per cent returned themselves as Sikhs which seems to be the response in tune with Sikhism but they belong to the general category hence their number is 46.85 per cent.

In the Deccan, on the other hand, no one returned oneself in the general caste but as Sikh. This proportion amounts to 55.41 per cent. Others in the sample are the tribal groups of Sikligars, Banjaras or Lambadas who have returned themselves by their tribal identity rather than any caste, general or other. There is no anomaly since it attests to the distinction between the tribe and caste. From this data one is tempted to draw an inference that the Dakhani Sikhs are practising the

(562)

tenets of Sikhism by opting out of the caste hierarchy, a welcome trend indeed. Further study may reveal the ground reality that may show something different.

One may wonder at the large population of the Scheduled Castes in the NE. Their number in the total sample of 540 is 281 that accounts for 52.04 per cent households. These people constitute 28.78 per cent households in the total sample of 1011 households. This large size is due to two factors as mentioned above. One, there is sizable population from Punjab settled in the NE who are the residents of the capital towns of Dispur/Guwahati and Shillong. They are *safai karamcharis*, the Scheduled Castes brought there by the colonial army for menial jobs about a century ago. Two, the Axomiya Sikhs numbering 119 have also returned themselves as Scheduled Castes thus we have 162 *safai karamcharis* and 119 out of 281 Scheduled Castes in the NE. Here are two explanations (see below).

When we relate the caste data to levels of income some interesting observations are thrown up. 39.77 per cent of the Scheduled Castes households have income of more than Rs. 14,000 per month while 48.14 per cent fall below that level. A further break up shows that in the whole sample, 18.53 per cent respondents only fall below the income level of Rs. 5,000 per month. It is not surprising when we look at the occupational structure of this population as mentioned above. The Axomiya Sikhs based in villages have land and the *safai karmacharis* of the capital towns are the employees in the public or semi-public sector drawing salaries. They have small business too looked after either by the wife of the male respondent or a grown up child in the family who is usually an unemployed son and a school drop out. These factors boost the monthly income of these Scheduled Castes families. In the present times when the jobs are getting scarce, some of them have got their sons loans from the government and other

funding agencies to ply cabs as between Guwahati and Shillong though many of them are employed as drivers with a taxi company. There are young men who find this work closer to their temperament and profitable too with rise in tourist and hotel industry besides the increased routine business. The cabs shuttle between Guwahati and Shillong as also between Nanded and Bidar on daily basis.

There are other similarities and dissimilarities in the responses of the subjects of this study among the two regions – the NE and the Deccan. The significant similarity is that all those who claim to be the descendants of the soldiers sent by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, namely the Axomiya Sikhs in Assam and the Dakhani Sikhs in the Deccan, seem to believe and practise the tenets of Sikh religion and philosophy. They do not mention their caste or even surname and even if one asks them persistently, they express ignorance. 'We do not know' is the standard reply. It is observed in the field that when some younger heads of the households asked their elders about this question they drew a blank.

Only a few amongst them mentioned their gotra or surname like Sandhu or Bhullar or Sodhi, but not the caste. There is hardly anyone who displays his gotra identity on the name plate or the visiting card (exceptions are of course always there) but some do claim that they are Sandhu, Bhullar, Sodhi or Bedi etc. It is pertinent to mention that these are the gotras or surnames of the Jutt Sikhs in Punjab and of the Sikh gurus. Those of them who are establishing alliances of their children in Punjab especially are getting conscious of this aspect of their identity and social status, others are still not bothered about it. They would prefer to be called as Sikhs. A Dakhani Sikh summed it up well: '*Yahaan iski zaroorat nahin.*' It is of no use here.

264

Besides these larger chunks of the sample, Sikligar and Banjara or Lambada communities in the Deccan also subscribe to the Sikh tenets and do not mention any caste or surname as it is not customary in a tribe. We have not come across a single such case in the sample. The tribes by definition do not have caste and there is opposition between the two on this count but the gotras too are not mentioned by them. There is no hierarchy there but only segmentation especially for purposes of marital alliances. The tribal people do not subscribe to the caste ideology and Sikhism seems to have further consolidated their non-hierarchical disposition with regard to social stratification. The tribal communities in the present study constitute about 41.82 per cent households, that is, 197 in the sample of 471 in the Deccan only. Thus we are left with 55.41 per cent households of Dakhani Sikhs there besides the tribal. There is no Sikh tribal household in the NE.

The situation in the NE is similar in the sense that the Axomiya Sikhs constitute about 46.85 per cent households in the sample who would address themselves as belonging to the general caste despite the fact they do not display their caste or surname anywhere. Paradoxically quite a large number amongst them call themselves Scheduled Castes and a very few as Other Backward Classes. There are two versions about it. One, their ancestor Ram Singh married one Scheduled Caste woman besides another one of higher caste whose progeny they are. Two, it is a ploy with them to seek and secure jobs, admissions, promotions and other benefits from the government due to the Scheduled Castes. Since they are Sikhs they cannot qualify for the tribal status, they are left with only option to acquire a Scheduled Castes certificate in a tribal dominated society.

The question of **language** is an important indicator of one's adaptation in an area distant from home. A look at the data reveals that the Axomiya Sikhs are

completely immersed in local language and culture of Assam if language spoken by them is considered a criterion. The present study tries to look at both the dimensions of language viz. **written** and **spoken**. The latter is further divided into two categories, that is, language spoken at home and outside. The former makes the private sphere where a person feels comfortable in one's mother tongue and the latter being public sphere where the constraints of speech are defined by the language of the dominant community and one declared official by the state.

In the case of NE, 62.78 per cent heads of households speak only Axomiya **at home** which makes 339 of the total sample of 540 households that includes Punjabi *safai karamcharis* too. If we break up this information further, from the Axomiya Sikhs alone it comes out to be 339/365, that is, 92.87 per cent. There are 4.26 per cent respondents who combine it with Hindi which enhances the number of Axomiya speakers to 67.04 percent from the total NE sample and to 97.14 per cent from among the Axomiya alone. Those who speak Hindi only at home are mere 0.56 per cent.

Table 5: Language spoken at home

Group/Sub Group	A	N	%	AH	N	%	H	N	%	HP	N	%	P	N	%	SKL	N	%	Mixed	N	%
Region																					
1. N.E	339		62.78	23		4.26	3		0.56	6		1.11	158		29.26				11		2.04
2. Dakhan							256		54.35	28		5.94	2		0.42	158		33.55	27		5.73
Income Group (Th)																					
1. Up to 5	65		20.77	1		0.32	89		28.43	6		1.92	33		10.54	99		31.63	20		6.39
2. 5-14	179		40.77	10		2.28	104		23.69	16		3.64	74		16.86	47		10.71	9		2.04
3. Above 14	95		36.68	12		4.63	66		25.48	12		4.63	53		20.46	12		4.64	9		3.47
All Data	339		33.53	23		2.27	259		25.62	34		3.36	160		15.83	158		15.63	38		3.75

A= Axomiya; H= Hindi; P= Punjabi; SKL= Sikligari

Interestingly there are 29.26 per cent respondents in this sample that speak only Punjabi at home. These are the *safai karamcharis* of Guwahati/Dispur and Shillong. Very few (1.11 per cent) of these people combine it with Hindi for

communication within the family. These people do not marry local women but always look forward to somebody from their own community either there only or from Punjab. As already mentioned the residents of the two capital towns of the NE have close social ties. Marriages between the the residents of these two places is quite common, almost a norm. It is this reason that the typical Punjabi dialect and intonation characteristic of their area of origin in Punjab are still intact despite staying there or even being born over there. There are only 2.04 per cent respondents who use more than two languages at home.

The case of language in Deccan is different from that of the NE. It is surprising to note that those Sikhs who speak only Telgu, being in Andhra Pradesh, is nil. I repeat, there is none who has returned speaking Telgu only at home though they are very fluent in it. 54.35 per cent return Hindi only as their language of conversation at home while 5.94 per cent combine it with Punjabi. Interestingly, there is merely 0.42 per cent respondents who speak only Punjabi which in Punjab is considered the language of the Sikhs and the communal Hindus here do not return Punjabi as their mother tongue.

The Punjabi Sikhs at both the places in the field of study namely, the NE and the Deccan consider it a limitation on the part of the local Sikhs there to qualify as 'true Sikhs', hence this slur –*Eh keho jehey Sikh ne, Punjabi nahin boldey*. That is why they are also referred to as 'duplicate' Sikhs. The reason for Hindi as their (Dakhani Sikhs') lingua franca is due to the metropolitan character of Hyderabad and Nanded being the centre of religious tourism where they have to interact with people of other regions and languages, Hindi comes most handy. Another important reason for returning Hindi as medium of speech at home is its proximity to Urdu, the state language of the erstwhile state of Hyderabad (Deccan) and the predominance

and prevalence of Muslim population and of Urdu there. It is found that there are 4.03 per cent respondents who use more than two languages at home.

Sikligars make their case different from Dakhani Sikhs. They have their own language or dialect called Sikligari used by them for conversation between members of the family and the community as well. Their number stands at 29.09 per cent and only 4.46 per cent combine this language with Hindi at home. It is due to the schooling of their children and more so of finding little difference between Urdu and Hindi, the latter being the national language. May be their nomadic life style also constrains them a little in this respect.

If the above description tells us about the language spoken at home it is also worthwhile looking into the language of conversation in the **public domain**. In the case of NE, 51.85 per cent respondents communicate in Axomiya only while 16.30 per cent also combine it with Hindi. Adding the two figures, the total number of Axomiya speaking Sikhs in the NE becomes 68.15 per cent. And those who speak only Hindi are 17.96 per cent. Since Sikh *safai karamcharis* also reside at Shillong they also combine Khasi with Hindi and this percentage comes out to be 6.30.

Table 6: Language spoken outside

Group/Sub Group	A		AH		H		HM		HM+others		HT		SH		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region																
1. N.E.	280	51.85	88	16.30	97	17.96									75	13.91
2. Dakhan					49	10.40	53	11.25	73	15.5	147	31.21	77	16.35	72	15.29
Income Group (Th)																
1. Up to 5	64	20.45	6	1.92	40	12.78	14	4.47	25	7.99	72	23.00	49	15.65	43	13.82
2. 5-14	145	33.03	46	10.48	67	15.26	21	4.78	38	8.65	51	11.62	20	4.56	51	11.62
3. Above 14	71	27.41	36	13.90	39	15.06	18	6.95	10	3.86	24	9.27	8	3.09	53	20.46
ALL DATA																
All Data	280	27.70	88	8.70	146	14.44	53	5.24	73	7.22	147	14.54	77	7.62	147	14.54

A = Axomiya; H = Hindi; M = Marathi; T = Telugu; S = Sikligari

The scene in the Deccan is different. There is no Sikh respondent who speaks only Telugu in Andhra Pradesh or only Marathi in Maharashtra or Kannad in

Karnataka but these regional languages are combined with Hindi in the public domain. Thus we have 31.21 per cent respondents who combine Hindi with Telgu which is the largest population in the sample from Andhra Pradesh. 11.25 per cent respondents combine it with Marathi that occupies the second position in the combination of languages while the last one combining Hindi with Kannad is mere 1.5 per cent. Since Sikhs do speak Punjabi which is never the sole language of communication in the public domain in the Deccan, it is invariably combined with other languages like Marathi in Nanded and Telgu in Hyderabad and other areas there but always as a minor component of the set. The proportion of those respondents who combine Hindi, Marathi and Punjabi is 9.98 per cent while those who combine Punjabi with Hindi and Telgu is mere 3.40 per cent. Quite interestingly, there are 10.40 per cent respondents amongst Dakhani Sikhs who speak Hindi only outside home. There are 8.28 per cent respondents who use more than three languages while talking to people outside home. This proportion is less in the NE, that is, 3.34 per cent respondents only.

Having looked at the spoken language at home and outside, it is also relevant to see what is the **writing** skill of the respondents in the sample and which language do they use. Since writing is possible only if a person is literate and educated, we find that the proportion of those who cannot write is quite small in the NE being only 6.48 per cent respondents while it is quite large in the Deccan where this figure hits at 36.73 per cent. An obvious explanation may be seen in the greater literacy level of general population in the NE as also of the component of the *safai karamcharis* who are invariably employed in the secretariat and other government offices and the educational facilities in terms of quantity and quality are easily available there. The colonial legacy of the town and Christian missionary zeal are responsible for

boosting the school education at Shillong. Besides the capital towns of Guwahati/Dispur and Shillong where there is no dearth of government and other schools of all types and for all classes of people, the villages - Barkola and Chaparmukh - of Nagaon too have schools from lower to higher levels.

Table 7: Language (Write)

Group/Sub Group	A		A+Other		E		EH		H		H+other		T		All/Many		Not Appli.	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region																		
1. N.E	241	44.63	109	20.19	8	1.48	45	8.33	45	8.33	53	9.82			4	0.74	35	6.48
2. Dakhan					6	1.27	33	7.01	53	11.25	102	25.90	11	2.34	73	15.51	173	36.73
Income Group (Th)																		
1. Up to 5	60	19.17	5	1.60	4	1.28	11	3.51	34	10.86	74	23.65	8	2.56	20	6.39	97	30.99
2. 5-14	133	30.30	45	10.25	3	0.68	37	8.43	53	12.07	68	15.48	3	0.68	26	5.92	71	16.17
3. Above 14	48	18.53	59	22.78	7	2.70	30	11.58	11	4.25	33	12.74			31	11.97	40	15.44
ALL DATA																		
All Data	241	23.84	109	10.78	14	1.38	78	7.72	98	9.69	175	17.31	11	1.09	77	7.62	208	20.57

A = Axomiya; H = Hindi; M = Marathi; T = Telegu; S = Sikligari; E = English

In case of the NE, 44.63 per cent respondents write in Axomiya only. They use no other language but there are 20.19 per cent respondents who combine Axomiya with one more language. Therefore, the total numbers of respondents who write in Axomiya are 350 or 64.82 per cent. On the other hand those who can write in Hindi only are 8.33 per cent respondents and others who combine it with Punjabi are 8.52 per cent while 8.33 per cent do combine it with English as well. The latter figure is solely due to the *safai karamcharis* of the NE and that too of senior generation since the modern youth is not given an exposure to the writing skills in their native language, Punjabi.

The situation in the Deccan is different where 36.73 per cent respondents cannot write. It is due to utter poverty of the Sikligars who do not reside permanently at a place due to their nomadic life style. It is for the first time in their history that due to the instructions of the then governor of Andhra Pradesh, Surjit Singh Barnala that a housing colony at Guru Gobind Singh Colony in the Ranga Reddy District has been designed for them where 285 families can reside. It is a sad state of affairs in

this respect that after this (36.73 per cent) proportion of people who could not write those who could write in Hindi, their percentage stands at 11.25 per cent and those who could do so in three languages namely Hindi, Telgu and English are 10.62 per cent respondents. There are however 7.01 per cent respondents who can write in Hindi and English both. Obviously these are the respondents of relatively younger generation who have schooling to some higher grade and are employed in some office. Others who could write in Hindi and Telgu, and Hindi and Marathi are 7.86 per cent and 5.31 per cent respondents respectively. All other combinations of languages in which these respondents could write vary between 1.27 per cent and 5.31 per cent.

In terms of the **size of the family** the larger proportion of sample (46.88 per cent) has three to four members followed by 33.14 per cent that have five to six members only. It is important to note that both the extremes of family sizes viz. up to two and more than six members have smaller percentage of households, 4.95 per cent and 15.03 per cent. This is the picture for the total sample but a comparison between the respondents of the NE and the Deccan also makes an interesting observation. The figures between the two regions are similar when the size is confined to 5-6 members. The NE has 32.04 per cent households while for the Deccan it stands at 34.39 per cent.

Table 8: Number of family members

Group/Sub Group	Up to 2		3-4		5-6		Above 6	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region								
1. N.E	31	5.74	304	56.30	173	32.04	32	5.93
2. Dakhan	19	4.03	170	36.09	162	34.39	120	25.48
Income Group (Th)								
1. Up to 5	28	8.95	153	48.88	100	31.95	32	10.22
2. 5-14	16	3.64	232	52.85	127	28.93	64	14.58
3. Above 14	6	2.32	89	34.36	108	41.70	56	21.62
ALL DATA								
All Data	50	4.95	474	46.88	335	33.14	152	15.03

There is greater variation at all other numbers of family members, for instance the 3-4 members are reported by 56.30 per cent households in the NE while the corresponding number stands at 36.09 per cent in the Deccan and when we consider the number of households with six members and more there is greater variation between the two regions. It is 5.93 per cent households in the NE but 25.48 per cent in the Deccan. For the overall data there are 4.95 per cent households that have up to two members only and 15.03 per cent have six or more members. The majority number of households however falls in the middle range of 3-6 members. Their total stands at 80.02 per cent. This shows that majority Sikh households have 3-6 members only.

A further break up shows that substantially large majority (46.88 per cent) of the total sample have mere 3-4 members in the family. Is it the effectiveness of the Government of India's slogan for family planning – *Hum do hamare do*? This study also tends to defy the popular perception that small income groups have families larger than the middle or high income groups. A further analysis shows that when we look at the lowest group of income up to Rs. 5,000 per month, there are 48.88

per cent households that have 3-4 members only. On the other hand, for the highest income group of Rs. 14,000 and more per month highest percentage of households, that is, 41.70 have 5-6 members.

The **income levels** of the total sample informs that 30.96 per cent households fall in the lowest rung of up to Rs. 5,000 per month while 25.62 per cent have Rs. 14,000 and more. The largest proportion of households (43.42 per cent) lies in the middle income level of Rs. 5,000-14,000 only. Thus we have about 74.18 per cent households that have monthly income of less than Rs. 14,000 per month. But inter-regional variations are quite manifestly visible. The households in the NE have consistently higher income than those in the Deccan. In the NE, the number of households in the first slot (up to Rs. 5,000) is mere 18.89 per cent while that in the Deccan it stands at 44.80 per cent. For the next slot of up to Rs. 14,000 per month, 50 per cent households in the NE are juxtaposed to 35.88 per cent in the Deccan. Once again in the highest category of more than Rs. 14,000 the Sikhs in the NE excel those in the Deccan. The latter have 19.32 per cent households only while the former have 31.11 per cent. The reason seems to lie in the nature of occupation that is different at two places. The agriculture and regular employment of the heads of the households in the NE put them at a pedestal of higher income as compared to those in the Deccan where majority respondents are involved in petty business and low income work like that of the Sikligar community.

Table 9: Income group in thousand Rupees

Group/Sub Group	Up to 5		5-14		14 Plus		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1. N.E	102	18.89	270	50.00	168	31.11	Chi ² =79.75**(df:2) C=0.27;
2. Dakhan	211	44.80	169	35.88	91	19.32	
Income Group (Th)							
1. Up to 5	313	100.0					Chi ² =2022.00**(df:4) C=0.82;
2. 5-14			439	100.0			
3. Above 14					259	100.0	
All Data	313	30.96	439	43.42	259	25.62	

A look at the **gender based** heads of the households division of income levels inform us that 90.11 per cent households can be split into three levels that do not mark much significant differences. 84.35 per cent households fall in the income level of up to Rs. 5,000 per month while 90.43 per cent and 96.53 per cent households have incomes between Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 14,000 per month and above Rs. 14,000 respectively. All these households are having a male head but those with a female head have the total 9.89 per cent. Out of these 15.65 per cent households have income level of less than Rs. 5,000 per month. 9.57 per cent respondents fall between Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 14,000, and only 3.47 per cent have income more than Rs. 14,000 per month. It tells us clearly that households with female heads do not carry out well as far as income generation is concerned.

274

Table 10: Sex

Group/Sub Group	Male		Female		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	477	88.33	63	11.67	Chi ² =4.10*(df:1) C=0.06;
2. Dakhan	434	92.14	37	7.86	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	264	84.35	49	15.65	Chi ² =23.68**(df:2) C=0.15;
2. 5-14	397	90.43	42	9.57	
3. Above 14	250	96.53	9	3.47	
ALL DATA					
All Data	911	90.11	100	9.89	

It is common knowledge that **income** and **occupation** or the type of work one is engaged in, are positively correlated. There is homogeneity in the type of low income occupations the respondents are following across the two diverse regions. The respondents who are engaged in high status and high salary jobs may be counted on finger tips. Following the discussion on income levels above it is clearly brought out in this table (No. 11) that the higher income levels in the NE as compared to the Deccan lies in the fact that in the case of former 19.07 per cent households are engaged in agriculture and 38.15 per cent in service or jobs. The corresponding figures in the Deccan are mere 1.91 and 23.14 per cent households. Besides these metal works is the only activity that has high proportion of 31.63 per cent households and these respondents also constitute the largest proportion (28.12 per cent) amongst all in the lowest income level of up to Rs. 5,000 per month. On the contrary those in job or service have the largest share of 49.42 per cent households in the top income level of Rs. 14,000 and above. Only other type of work that comes next with 23.55 per cent households is small business. All other types of work lag far behind these.

Table 11: Type of work (present)

Group/Su Group	Met.Work		Driver		House Work		Self/Busi.		Agricult.		Job/Serv.		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region														
1. N.E	2	0.37	43	7.96	35	6.48	100	18.52	103	19.07	206	38.15	51	9.45
2. Dakhan	149	31.63	38	8.07	12	2.55	86	18.26	9	1.91	109	23.14	68	14.44
Income Group (Th														
1. Up to 5	88	28.12	15	4.79	17	5.43	50	15.97	19	6.07	65	20.77	59	18.85
2. 5-14	49	11.16	59	13.44	26	5.92	75	17.08	73	16.63	122	27.79	35	7.97
3. Above 14	14	5.41	7	2.70	4	1.54	61	23.55	20	7.72	128	49.42	25	9.65
All Data	151	14.94	81	8.01	47	4.65	186	18.40	112	11.08	315	31.16	119	11.77

The majority respondents in the sample of 1011 are engaged in low level jobs like being a driver of an auto-rickshaw or a taxi; in a private or a religious institution like a gurdwara which is a major source of employment to the Dakhani Sikhs where ever they are. Some have petty business like small corner booths or stalls selling assorted items or repairing some electronic gadgets etc. while others are engaged in labour. The women heads of households have invariably returned their occupation as house work. In the NE, 6.48 per cent and in the Deccan 2.55 per cent respondents are engaged in house work. In the overall sample only 1.78 per cent respondents do no work which is more due to their old age and ill health.

The **Sikligars** are self-employed in the sense that they make their own tools and sell them as hawkers. All members of this community have returned metal works as their main occupation that is also their traditional occupation. 31.63 per cent heads of households in the Deccan fall in this category that makes about 14.94 per cent of the total sample of 1011 households. The people also have the largest share in the low level income of Rs. 5,000 and less per month. (See Table No. 12) Those respondents who have returned job or service as their present occupation take the largest share with 31.16 per cent households. Out of these 38.15 per cent are in the NE and 23.14 per cent in the Deccan. Self employment or business, as they would like to call even a small booth in a corner of their house, has about 18.40

per cent households and the share of numbers between the two regions is just the same, 18.52 per cent in the NE and 18.26 per cent in the Deccan. The number of those respondents as head of the household engaged in driving is also similar, that is, 7.96 percent and 8.07 per cent respectively. Doing labour does not have a significant share in the sample. It is mere 4.65 per cent households.

Agriculture on the other hand is practised by 19.07 per cent households in the NE, Assam in particular and none in Shillong or Meghalaya. It is an insignificant 1.91 per cent only in the Deccan. Why the Sikhs there do not opt for agriculture? When this question is put to the respondents they reply that they had been employed in the Nizam's forces and the service of a male member in the family was ensured by the state. When a son of the soldier of Jamiat-i-Sikhan, the Irregular Troops of Sikhs attained the age of five, he was given an honorarium or a scholarship whatever it was, till he was absorbed in the forces proper at the age of eighteen years. A senior Dakhani Sikh respondent of Hyderabad informs: 'Since our jobs were secure we never bothered to look for anything else and which is why we never took studies seriously. It is our service orientation that made us least disposed to any other kind of trade or agriculture. We prefer a petty job to agriculture. The latter is not in our blood. That is why you will not find any Dakhani Sikh engaged in agriculture.'

It makes quite a contrasting picture with Assam where the ancestors of the Sikhs who lost the battle and flew to the rural hinterland for hiding had no option but to adopt agriculture as their means of livelihood. Abundance of natural resources, good soil and plenty of water must have pushed them towards agriculture something quite similar to the traditional family occupation of the soldiers back home in Punjab. It was this engagement with land and agriculture that must have made them stick to

the rural areas in Assam. This rural habitation and agricultural occupation besides marrying local women is responsible for the cutting of their umbilical cord with the language, culture and society of Punjab.

We have asked the respondents about their present occupation and the one over the **last five years**. We find no change in occupation for 95.55 per cent heads of the households at both the places. For the NE this figure is still higher with 97.41 per cent sticking to the same occupation while the corresponding figure is 93.42 per cent which of course is hardly different. This speaks about the changelessness of the attitude of the respondents about their occupation that may mean many things.

Table 12: Type of work (previous)

Group/Sub Group	Drive/Self		Job/Serv.		Busi./Prie		Present		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region									
1. N.E			14	2.59			526	97.41	
2. Dakhan	5	1.06	22	4.67	4	0.85	440	93.42	Chi ² =13.79** (df:3) C=0.12;
Income Group (Th)									
1. Up to 5	1	0.32	2	0.64			310	99.04	
2. 5-14	4	0.91	8	1.82	1	0.23	426	97.04	
3. Above 14			26	10.04	3	1.16	230	88.80	Chi ² =51.86** (df:6) C=0.22;
ALL DATA									
All Data	5	0.49	36	3.56	4	0.40	966	95.55	

Self= Self-employed; Drive= Driver; Busi= Business; Prie= Priest

(i) There are no opportunities available for this class of people in terms of capital, educational and technical skills and such other resources, though the higher and middle classes may have these in the metropolitan and capital towns of shining India. This acts as an external constraint. (ii) There may be an internal constraint on the part of these people themselves who are willing to carry on with the present occupation hence the existing life style may be just due to inertia or may be because

they cannot lay their hands on something better effectively. Their religious orientation and contentment with life following the dictum: '*Rabb ki raza mein razi rehna.*'

This argument may be substantiated by a related question about the **satisfaction level** with their present occupation. Interestingly many respondents do not report gross dissatisfaction with their present occupation. For the total data, 53.91 per cent respondents expressed dissatisfaction while 46.09 per cent only are satisfied. (See Table No. 13) The gap between the two levels is not surprisingly significant especially in the present times when gross dissatisfaction is associated with heightened aspiration levels necessary for progress and development.

Table 13: Satisfied with present job

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	237	43.89	303	56.11	Chi ² =2.27(df:1) C=0.05;
2. Dakhan	229	48.62	242	51.38	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	70	22.36	243	77.64	Chi ² =217.18**(df:2) C=0.42;
2. 5-14	181	41.23	258	58.77	
3. Above 14	215	83.01	44	16.99	
ALL DATA					
All Data	466	46.09	545	53.91	

The range of variation between the responses of the sample of two regions also is not that significant. Whatever difference is reflected is conspicuously marginal. For instance, if 56.11 per cent respondents are not satisfied with their present occupation in the NE the corresponding figure in the Deccan is 51.38 per cent. Similarly, the proportions of those satisfied are 43.89 and 48.62 per cent respectively. The higher proportion of the dissatisfied in the NE may be due to the menial jobs that the *safai karamcharis* of Dispur/Guwahati and Shillong are

279

performing and the additional factor would be the label of outsider on them in Meghalaya. Numerous respondents confessed during their interviews these aspects of their occupation and satisfaction. One of their senior leaders phrased their predicament in chaste Punjabi: '*Phasey hoye 'an. Chhadna vi chaunde 'an, chhad vi nahin sakdey. Aithey koi hor karobar vi nahin kar sakde. Dukan-makan khareedan te pabandi 'ai.*' Literally put, we are caught in it. We want to leave but can't. We can't do other business either. There is ban on buying property - house or shop.

Since all occupations of whatever type, have a **cycle** of a sort whatever that may be, but surely there is, we ask the respondents about their work cycle over the year under normal circumstances. It is found that about 41.84 per cent respondents have an all season work whereas 37.29 per cent respond that it does not apply to them. This had been the lacuna of the present study that neither the project

Table 14: Seasonal cycle of work

Group/Sub Group	All N	%	Winter N	%	Summer N	%	Festival N	%	Not Appli. N	%	
Region											
1. N.E	376	69.63	1	0.19	64	11.85	4	0.74	95	17.59	Chi ² =470.25** C=0.56;
2. Dakhan	47	9.98	23	4.88	23	4.88	96	20.38	282	59.87	
Income Group (Th)											
1. Up to 5	84	26.84	14	4.47	19	6.07	59	18.85	137	43.77	Chi ² =97.58** C=0.30;
2. 5-14	196	44.65	7	1.59	56	12.76	32	7.29	148	33.71	
3. Above 14	143	55.21	3	1.16	12	4.63	9	3.47	92	35.52	
ALL DATA											
All Data	423	41.84	24	2.37	87	8.61	100	9.89	377	37.29	

fellows collecting data nor the respondents have been able to grasp the significance of this question despite repeated instructions to them. The former are to be blamed more than the latter. Whatever information has been gathered shows that there are inter-regional variations in this response. 69.63 per cent respondents in the NE opted for the all season work compared to 9.98 per cent in the Deccan. On the contrary, 17.59 per cent respondents in the former region and 59.87 per cent in the

latter region reply that this question does not apply to them. The Sikligars were quick to mention that in certain months when religious and other festivals fall, for instance Diwali, Dussehra, Dhantera or Navratras etc. their engagement is doubled which is lean in other periods. Many of these respondents have agreed: '*Hamara season to char mahiney ka hota hai. Aatth mahiney to khatay hi hain.*' That we have a season for four months only. We eat for eight months.

Another question from the respondents about doing an activity **when not gainfully** engaged in a productive activity also meets the same fate. It is neither properly put to the respondents nor adequately answered by them. Whatever responses we have obtained show that 16.12 per cent respondents in the total sample spend time with family and friends while 28.68 per cent respondents keep themselves busy doing the home work. Substantially large majority (55.19 per cent) filed a 'does not apply to them' column. Whatever be the quality of data collected, the inter-regional variations are reflected therein. In the NE, 26.10 per cent respondents remain with friends and family but a mere 4.46 per cent do so in the Deccan. 22.96 per cent and 35.24 per cent respondents respectively are busy doing home work.

Table 15: Do what, when not employed

Group/Sub Group	Fam./Frien		Home Work		N.A.		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1. N.E	142	26.30	124	22.96	274	50.74	Chi ² =91.80** (df:2) C=0.29;
2. Dakhan	21	4.46	166	35.24	284	60.30	
Income Group (Th)							
1. Up to 5	37	11.82	116	37.06	160	51.12	Chi ² =27.44** (df:4) C=0.16;
2. 5-14	72	16.40	127	28.93	240	54.67	
3. Above 14	54	20.85	47	18.15	158	61.00	
ALL DATA							
All Data	163	16.12	290	28.68	558	55.19	

When an enquiry is made from the respondents about the **number of days** of their gainful employment or engagement in occupation, it is informed that 29.48 per cent heads of the households are engaged round the year (Table No. 16). It includes those engaged in employment of a sort in a government or private or a religious institution or even running an auto-rickshaw or a taxi etc. About 15.23 per cent respondents remain engaged for about 240-365 days and 7.22 per cent between 120-240 days in a year. Only 6.33 per cent respondents are engaged for less than 120 days. But there are a large number of respondents (41.74 per cent) who inform that this question does not apply to them. Of the two regions this proportion is too high for the respondents in the NE that is, 71.48 per cent. My hunch is that due to the improper framing of the question by the project fellows those engaged in self employment and agriculture returned this figure. Only 11.30 per cent respondents there remain engaged for about 120 days. In the Deccan, on the other hand 76.43 per cent respondents remain gainfully employed from 240-365 days in a year. The corresponding figure for the NE is poor, 17.04 per cent.

Table 16: Days of gainful employment

Group/Sub Group	Up to 120		120-240		240-365		365		N.A.		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region											
1. N.E	61	11.30	1	0.19	1	0.19	91	16.85	386	71.48	Chi ² =605.19** C=0.61;
2. Dakhan	3	0.64	72	15.29	153	32.48	207	43.95	36	7.64	
Income Group (Th)											
1. Up to 5	11	3.51	44	14.06	89	28.43	87	27.80	82	26.20	Chi ² =146.59** C=0.36;
2. 5-14	49	11.16	23	5.24	46	10.48	118	26.88	203	46.24	
3. Above 14	4	1.54	6	2.32	19	7.34	93	35.91	137	52.90	
ALL DATA											
All Data	64	6.33	73	7.22	154	15.23	298	29.48	422	41.74	

We are also interested in finding out the **inter-generational change** in the occupations of the respondents and their parents. As a result of the forces of

modernisation and change in economy over the past few decades and especially since independence of the country, there is significant change in the occupational structure between two generations. The present generation is less likely to follow the traditional occupation of their parents. The present study too upholds this theoretical formulation. Table No. 11 above (occupation of the head of the household) when compared with Table No. 17 (occupation of the head's father) attests to the above formulation. We can see clearly a shift in the low paid, less skilled and low income occupations to high income, more skilled, regular service occupations. What we mean is that with modernisation of economy and society, agriculture and other land related occupations recede in preference whereas technical and skilled services tend to go up. There is an exception indeed. The Sikligar community is still sticking to its traditional occupation though trends of diversification are manifesting there too.

Table No. 17 informs that fathers of 33.63 per cent heads of households are engaged in agriculture compared to the present 11.08 per cent heads of households. This proportion is still higher because of the agriculturalists' preponderance in the NE. A break up of the region-wise information shows further that in case of the NE it is found that 54.44 per cent **fathers** of the present heads of households have agriculture as their principal occupation which is only 9.77 per cent for the Sikhs in Deccan. The corresponding proportions for the present generation are 19.07 per cent heads of households in the NE and a mere 1.91 per cent in the Deccan. Thus we find a clear inter-generational shift in agricultural occupation from 54.44 per cent to 19.07 per cent in the NE and from 9.77 per cent to 1.91 per cent in the Deccan.

This figure may appear to be higher in the case of Sikhs in the Deccan given their social and occupational history who were in the services of the Nizam of

Hyderabad till the middle of the last century. 9.77 per cent people of the previous generation had landholdings not in and around Hyderabad but other smaller towns like Karimnagar, Warangal, Adilabad, Medak etc. in the present state of Andhra Pradesh and in Bidar and Nanded also in the erstwhile state of Deccan. Whatever land holdings were there, got fragmented over generations and rendered nonviable, hence an insignificantly small population of Dakhani Sikhs remain engaged in agriculture.

Table 17: Do what, when not employed (father)

Group/Sub Group	Metal Work		Driver		Self Emp.		Agricult.		Job/Serv.		other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region												
1. N.E			23	4.26	60	11.12	294	54.44	107	19.81	56	10.37
2. Dakhan	147	13.21	19	4.03	49	10.4	46	9.77	145	30.79	65	13.8
Income Group (Th)												
1. Up to 5	88	28.12	13	4.15	32	10.23	81	25.88	55	17.57	44	14.06
2. 5-14	47	10.71	23	5.24	42	9.56	175	39.86	107	24.37	45	10.26
3. Above 14	12	4.63	6	2.32	35	13.52	84	32.43	90	34.75	32	12.35
ALL DATA												
All Data	147	14.54	42	4.15	109	10.78	340	33.63	252	24.93	121	11.97

The culture of service in the Dakhani Sikhs is also borne out from the present data. The proportion of fathers engaged in job or service stands at 30.79 per cent in the Deccan compared to 23.14 per cent of the present heads of households (See Table No. 11). This fall in proportion is obviously not due to their disinclination but due to the scarcity of government jobs over the last few decades. This inclination amongst the Dakhani Sikhs is well borne out when we compare the data with their counterparts in the NE. The present generation has 38.15 per cent respondents in jobs or services compared to 19.81 per cent of the previous generation. This higher proportion is due to shift from agriculture to other occupations, especially government or public sector employment.

Interestingly the continuity of traditional occupation is best seen in the case of Sikligars. This is also a tribal trait to carry out their specific occupation throughout the community. There is matching in the proportions of the present generation's occupation and that of their fathers. 31.21 per cent respondents of the previous generation are engaged in the metal works (same occupation) while it stands at 31.63 per cent for the present heads of the households. It shows an ascent howsoever small and insignificant.

There is hardly any variation and intergenerational change on the occupations of the **mothers** of the present heads of households. For the total sample the proportion of mothers engaged in domestic or house work stands at 98.71 per cent. The region-wise break up shows hardly any variation that is 98.89 per cent in the NE and 98.51 per cent in the Deccan. This is remarkable similarity in this respect of women's occupation or work in India's two corners that are socio-culturally different – NE and the Deccan.

After examining the major socio-economic characteristics of the Sikh communities in the NE and Deccan, it is imperative to look into the types of their **dwelling**s and other household amenities that they have and are essential for a living. (See Table No. 18)

Table 18: Dwelling

Group/Sub Group	Kulli		Own House		Rented	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region						
1. N.E	2	0.37	479	88.70	59	10.93
2. Dakhan	7	1.49	354	75.16	110	23.35
						Chi ² =32.37** (df:2) C=0.18;
Income Group (Th)						
1. Up to 5	6	1.92	222	70.93	85	27.16
2. 5-14	3	0.68	381	86.79	55	12.53
3. Above 14			230	88.80	29	11.20
						Chi ² =43.27** (df:4) C=0.20;
ALL DATA						
All Data	9	0.89	833	82.39	169	16.72

Whatever be the size of dwelling and its type –*kulli*, own house and rented— 82.39 per cent households own it that may be pucca or kacha (See Table No. 18). One also owns a *kulli* that is a make shift arrangement of bamboos or rods and a tarpaulin or polythene cover, erected at a public place or a vacant plot. About one per cent households still live in these temporary structures sixty five years after independence. On the other hand, 16.72 per cent households live in rented accommodation. It is not surprising that given the location of the sample households in the capital towns both in the NE and the Deccan. But there is inter-regional variation as 88.70 per cent households in the NE and 75.16 per cent in the Deccan have own house. The number of those living in rented accommodation also varies between the two regions. Double the number (23.35 per cent) have rented house in the Deccan compared to the NE (10.93 per cent households). It is pity noting that despite the rainy weather in the NE, 0.37 per cent households live in *kullis* while 1.5 per cent do so in the Deccan and all of these are Sikligars. The case of Manna Singh's *kulli* described above is characteristic of such habitation.

When we look at the **type of house** –pucca, kacha or mixed– it is found that 74.19 per cent houses are pucca which means these are made of bricks and cement plastered even if partially (see Table No. 20). 17.80 per cent houses are *kacha*, that is, made of mud. The proportion of the *pucca* houses is more in the NE, about 79.26 per cent while the Deccan is short of by 11 per cent. 8.01 per cent houses are mixed that is both *kacha* and *pucca*. The number of such houses is double (10.37 per cent) in the NE as compared to the Deccan that has 5.31 per cent houses only.

Table 19: House type

Group/Sub Group	Pucca		Kacha		Mixed		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1. N.E	428	79.26	56	10.37	56	10.37	
2. Dakhan	322	68.36	124	26.33	25	5.31	Chi ² =150.83** (df:3) C=0.36;
Income Group (Th)							
1. Up to 5	189	60.39	94	30.03	30	9.58	
2. 5-14	319	72.67	79	18.00	41	9.34	
3. Above 14	242	93.44	7	2.70	10	3.86	Chi ² =117.20** (df:6) C=0.32;
ALL DATA							
All Data	750	74.19	180	17.80	81	8.01	

In common parlance the *pucca* character of a house is determined by the type of **roof** it has. It becomes *pucca* if the roof is permanent and more so made of concrete. Earlier the bricks and wooden bars what we call as (*kadi-bala* or *datanwala*) also qualified for the permanent roof. The other type of roof is temporary that may be made by tarpaulin or polythene sheets or corrugated/tin sheets. Given the price of metal corrugated sheets and fibre glass have become its substitutes. The poorest of the poor however have to take shelter under the tarpaulin or polythene sheets. Manna Singh's *kulli* is a graphic description of this type of *kulli* dwelling. In the total sample 57.07 per cent houses have permanent roof 1.58 per

cent households have temporary roof made of tarpaulin or polythene. 41.35 per cent have been put in the mixed category and in such cases the temporary roofs is made of corrugated sheets. Interestingly comparing the two regions we find lower proportion of permanent roof houses in the NE despite the high rainfall there but more in the Deccan, 60.72 per cent (see Table No. 20).

Table 20: Type of roof

Group/Sub Group	Permanent		Temporary		Mixed		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1. N.E	291	53.89	8	1.49	241	44.63	Chi ² =5.16(df:3) C=0.07;
2. Dakhan	286	60.72	8	1.70	177	37.58	
Income Group (Th)							
1. Up to 5	149	47.60	6	1.92	158	50.48	Chi ² =61.80**(df:6) C=0.24;
2. 5-14	228	51.94	8	1.82	203	46.24	
3. Above 14	200	77.22	2	0.78	57	22.01	
ALL DATA							
All Data	577	57.07	16	1.58	418	41.35	

After the roof follows, the turn of **floor** type to characterise a house as *pucca* or *kacha*. 71.14 per cent houses are cemented or pucca in this case while 22.45 per cent have *kacha* floor. It means there are not even un-plastered bricks. It is made of mud only. Looking at the two regions it is found that Deccan households are ahead of their counterpart in the NE to have *pucca* cement floor in their houses. The figures are 84.92 per cent and 59.63 per cent respectively. On the other hand, figures for the *kacha* floor at the two places are 13.38 per cent and 30.37 per cent houses respectively (see Table No. 21). If the mixed houses are 8.01 per cent in the sample, 6.13 per cent houses have mixed floor but there is huge difference between the two regions. For instance, if there are 10.00 per cent such houses in the NE, the figure for the Deccan is mere 1.70 per cent.

288

Table 21: Floor type

Group/Sub Group	Pucca		Kacha		Mixed		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1. N.E	322	59.63	164	30.37	54	10.00	Chi ² =142.09**(df:3) C=0.35;
2. Dakhan	400	84.92	63	13.38	8	1.70	
Income Group (Th)							
1. Up to 5	197	62.94	103	32.91	13	4.15	Chi ² =107.39**(df:6) C=0.31;
2. 5-14	282	64.24	117	26.65	40	9.11	
3. Above 14	243	93.82	7	2.70	9	3.47	
ALL DATA							
All Data	722	71.41	227	22.45	62	6.13	

The size of a dwelling is an important indicator too of the socio-economic status of the household and it is easily and best indexed in terms of the **number of rooms** it has. We have looked at a range of one to four or more rooms in a house. A look at the whole data for the two regions combined tells that except for the single room houses (17.61 per cent) all other types from two to three and four or more rooms approximate one another closely such as 24.83 per cent, 29.18 per cent and 28.39 per cent houses respectively. The majority of households with two to three rooms stand at 54.01 per cent (see Table No. 22).

There are regional variations that are worth noting and tell us about the differences in the sample households. The table shows that 35.24 per cent houses in the Deccan have a single room while this number is negligible, a mere 2.22 per cent in the NE. Likewise when the number of rooms is four or more, the NE houses count at 40.19 per cent while those in the Deccan stand at a much lower 14.86 per cent. Similarly there is inter-regional variation in the number of two and three room houses. In the NE two room houses are 20.74 per cent but in the Deccan 29.51 per cent while three room houses count at 36.85 per cent and 20.38 per cent respectively. The relation of this variable with levels of monthly income is more than

obvious. There is definite direct relation between the two. 41.21 per cent houses belong to those respondents that have monthly income lower than Rs. 5,000. This percentage falls sharply to 2.70 per cent for those who have income of Rs. 14,000 per month. It shows the number of rooms in a house increases with increase in levels of income.

Table 22: No. of rooms

Group/Sub Group	One N	%	Two N	%	Three N	%	Four/More N	%	
Region									
1.N.E	12	2.22	112	20.74	199	36.85	217	40.19	Chi ² =243.82* C=0.44;
2.Dakhan	166	35.24	139	29.51	96	20.38	70	14.86	
Income Group (Th)									
1.Up to 5	129	41.21	85	27.16	73	23.32	26	8.31	Chi ² =241.94** C=0.44;
2. 5-14	42	9.57	118	26.88	144	32.80	135	30.75	
3.Above 14	7	2.70	48	18.53	78	30.12	126	48.65	
ALL DATA									
All Data	178	17.61	251	24.83	295	29.18	287	28.39	

Along with the number of rooms, **kitchen, toilet and bathroom** are an important indicator of the civic status of a household. In modern urban culture and life, a house without these basic amenities – toilet and bathroom– is considered substandard not worthy of human habitation. In earlier times and in the traditional dwellings these are supposed to be away from the living rooms if not outside the house itself but not now. Moreover these two are always kept separate. Bringing them together is a modern style of two-in-one type. Now these have been brought closest to the living space, the bed rooms especially. Given this modern sensibility and life style culture, it seems difficult to believe that 13.25 per cent houses in the total sample do not have a **toilet**. There are more houses in the Deccan that lack the facility of a toilet and this figure stands at 18.47 per cent. On the other hand, there are only 8.70 per cent such houses in the NE. A relation with the income level also shows that if there are 24.28 per cent houses in the first income group, which is

more likely, there are 6.56 per cent such houses in the top income group of more than Rs. 14,000 per month. Whatever be the facility and however unclean it may be, since the Sikhs in the NE are either in villages or living in capital towns, they (91.30 per cent) have the provision for a toilet. 8.70 per cent houses without toilets may be situated in the villages where people may be going to the fields since this 'facility' to enjoy the call of nature in nature is available to them (see Table No. 23).

Table 23: Toilet

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	493	91.30	47	8.70	Chi ² =20.88** (df:1) C=0.14;
2. Dakhan	384	81.53	87	18.47	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	237	75.72	76	24.28	Chi ² =49.04** (df:2) C=0.22;
2. 5-14	398	90.66	41	9.34	
3. Above 14	242	93.44	17	6.56	
ALL DATA					
All Data	877	86.75	134	13.25	

As far as **bathroom** is concerned there is hardly any difference with respect to the data on toilet for the total sample of 1011 households. But the inter-regional variations are there but relatively less pronounced. If 15.56 per cent houses in the NE have a bathroom there are 11.68 per cent such houses in the Deccan though there are 18.47 per cent houses that do not have a toilet. In the total sample, at both the places, 86.25 per cent houses have bathrooms while 13.75 per cent do not have this facility. Once again there are 6.95 per cent houses in the top income group that are without a bathroom as well. One given to urbane civility may find it difficult to digest this information.

291

Table 24: Bathroom

Group/Sub Group	Yes N	%	No N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	456	84.44	84	15.56	
2. Dakhan	416	88.32	55	11.68	Chi ² =3.19(df:1) C=0.06;
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	241	77.00	72	23.00	
2. 5-14	390	88.84	49	11.16	
3. Above 14	241	93.05	18	6.95	Chi ² =35.18**(df:2) C=0.18;
ALL DATA All Data	872	86.25	139	13.75	

The cooking of meals is a major yardstick of civilisational existence because this is a primary and most essential component of a settled life. Once again the reader is in for a surprise since 19.29 per cent houses in the sample across two regions do not have a **kitchen** and this number is appallingly higher in the Deccan, 35.46 per cent. The case of the NE is slightly better in the sense that there are only 5.19 per cent such houses. It is necessary to relate this aspect with the levels of income of the respondents. It is fair enough for the lowest income group of less than Rs. 5,000 per month that 37.38 per cent houses in the total sample do without a kitchen but there are 8.11 per cent houses in the top income group of Rs. 14,000 and above which do not have a kitchen. The percentage of those in the middle income group per month (Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 14,000) is 9.34 per cent (see Table No. 25). This anomaly needs to be probed further.

292

Table 25: Kitchen

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	512	94.81	28	5.19	
2. Dakhan	304	64.54	167	35.46	Chi ² =148.08**(df:1) C=0.36;
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	196	62.62	117	37.38	
2. 5-14	382	87.02	57	12.98	
3. Above 14	238	91.89	21	8.11	Chi ² =97.81**(df:2) C=0.30;
ALL DATA					
All Data	816	80.71	195	19.29	

Drinking water is absolutely essential for life. Paradoxically, with the development of other facilities and capital intensive technologies drinking water is becoming a scarcity all over which is why some people surmise that the next world war would be over the issue of water. We already have disputes between different states of the country on the issue of water rights and water sharing, be it north or the south. There has already emerged the water market in the country for drinking and irrigation both. Therefore obtaining information on the source of drinking water of the sample households is pertinent. It could be owned personally or else it is shared with others what is called a community tap installed by the municipal committee in a town big or small. I am told by a Sikligar respondent how some members of their community do not have a single such source, not even in their vicinity. They have been pushed to the town's periphery where there is no such facility. They are constrained to take water from the irrigation channels in the nearby fields depending upon the mercy of the farmer.

Table 26: Source of drinking water

Group/Sub Group	Tap N	%	Hand Pump N	%	Common N	%	Other N	%
Region								
1. N.E	90	16.67	324	60.00	109	20.19	17	3.15
2. Dakhan	257	54.56	20	4.25	111	23.57	83	17.62
Income Group (Th)								
1. Up to 5	103	32.91	52	16.61	122	38.98	36	11.50
2. 5-14	141	32.12	181	41.23	78	17.77	39	8.88
3. Above 14	103	39.77	111	42.86	20	7.72	25	9.65
ALL DATA All Data	347	34.32	344	34.03	220	21.76	100	9.89

We are interested in looking into three sources of drinking water like **water tap**, **hand pump** and the **community tap** common to all and equally accessible to all and sundry. For the total sample there is no difference in the proportion of households having a tap and a hand pump. These are 34.32 per cent and 34.03 per cent households respectively. There are 21.76 per cent households that make use of a common source while there are still 9.89 per cent households that depend on some other source which means a distant tap or a hand pump or sometimes even a water channel for irrigation in the fields nearby.

The inter-regional variations are also worth noticing and revealing about the availability of the very source of life. No doubt for the overall data 34 per cent households each have water taps and hand pumps with them but when the two regions are compared we find that 16.67 per cent households have taps while 60.00 per cent have hand pumps. The corresponding figures for the Deccan households are 54.56 and meagre 4.25 per cent households respectively. The data shows that majority (76.67 per cent) households in the NE enjoy the ownership of a source of drinking water that may be a tap or a hand pump but there are only 58.81 per cent

houses in the Deccan with similar facility. However the number of households that depend on a common source is almost equal at both places, that is, 20.19 per cent and 23.57 per cent households respectively. Putting all the figures together we find that 96.86 per cent households in the NE and 82.38 per cent in the Deccan do have the facility of drinking water of some kind.

Yet it is dismaying to know that 17.62 per cent households in the Deccan neither own a source of drinking water nor have a common source, they depend on other sources that also includes taking water from irrigation channels in the fields as well. This percentage is quite small (3.15 per cent) in the NE but given the abundance of water there all over, this is a matter for concern. A penetration into the data for the lowest income group reveals that their proportion is highest amongst all to depend on the common and other sources of drinking water. But this is also interesting that 7.72 per cent households in the top income group rely on the common source and still larger proportion of them (9.65 per cent households) depend on other sources. Their number is not far behind those in the lowest income group 11.50 per cent.

The **source of light** is also very important in the present day society where the consumption of electricity is an index of its development. Living without it now is assumed to be impossible even though this facility is merely a few decades old. Electrification of Indian villages is still a more recent development and many are yet without it, but those living in cities and towns cannot think of living without it, hence its importance.

295

Table 27: Source of light

Group/Sub Group	Earth.Lamp		Elect.Bulb		Both		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1. N.E	38	7.04	425	78.70	77	14.26	Chi ² =23.72**(df:2) C=0.15;
2. Dakhan	22	4.67	422	89.60	27	5.73	
Income Group (Th)							
1. Up to 5	41	13.10	236	75.40	36	11.50	Chi ² =49.41**(df:4) C=0.22;
2. 5-14	16	3.64	373	84.97	50	11.39	
3. Above 14	3	1.16	238	91.89	18	6.95	
ALL DATA							
All Data	60	5.93	847	83.78	104	10.29	

The source of light could be an electric bulb and the traditional earthen lamp. As far as electric bulb is concerned 83.78 per cent houses in the total sample avail this facility, while only 5.93 per cent houses use earthen lamp. The households in the NE using lamp are more in number (7.04 per cent) as compared to the Deccan with 4.67 per cent houses. This is despite the greater poverty in the Deccan where 44.80 per cent households have income of less than Rs. 5,000 per month compared to 18.89 per cent in the NE (see Table No. 9). However there are 10.29 per cent houses in the total sample that have both – electric bulbs and earthen lamps. The number of households using both sources is significantly higher (14.26 per cent) in the NE than the houses in Deccan which is 5.73 per cent. The regional break up further shows that if 89.60 per cent houses in the Deccan use electric bulb while there are only 78.70 per cent in the NE. 14.26 per cent houses there use both sources which percentage (5.73) is quite small in the Deccan.

Life is not possible without food for which **source of cooking** is absolutely essential. LPG (liquefied petroleum gas), kerosene and firewood are the three main

types that are shortlisted from the data collected. The use of the LPG is comparable for both the regions where the average stands at 64.79 per cent households and there is hardly much difference between the two regions. Of the total 1011 households, 18.20 per cent use kerosene and 16.42 per cent burn firewood. The inter-regional differences are seen in the use of kerosene and firewood. The former is used more by the households in the NE, that is, 30.56 per cent while the latter is consumed more in the households of the Deccan, that is, 32.70 per cent. Only 2.22 per cent households in the NE use firewood where the forest is also more and more than half the sample population is also living in the villages of Assam. The Sikhs in Deccan hardly live in villages yet they are banking on the firewood. It is an anomaly that needs further exploration.

Once again there is obvious positive correlation between this variable and the income of respondents. But still certain variety is seen which is quite interesting. The use of LPG is more closely related to income levels and the difference between the lowest and the highest income groups is almost double, taking a jump from 46.96 per cent at the first level to 84.56 per cent at the highest level. Conversely, there is greater fall from 34.50 per cent using firewood with low income households to 3.47 per cent in the higher group. The use of kerosene however, is not that significantly influenced by the income levels. It hovers around 18.20 per cent only.

Table 28: Source of cooking

Group/Sub Group	LPG		Kerosene		Firewood		All/Mix	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region								
1. N.E	358	66.30	165	30.56	12	2.22	5	0.93
2. Dakhan	297	63.06	19	4.03	154	32.70	1	0.21
Income Group (Th)								
1. Up to 5	147	46.96	57	18.21	108	34.50	1	0.32
2. 5-14	289	65.83	98	22.32	49	11.16	3	0.68
3. Above 14	219	84.56	29	11.20	9	3.47	2	0.77
ALL DATA								
All Data	655	64.79	184	18.20	166	16.42	6	0.59

This study intends looking further into other amenities in the household while most amongst them have ceased to be so any longer, as these have become essential items for a very basic level of civilised existence. It has been seen that many of these minimally required items also are not available in all the households. For instance, a cooking stove and a pressure cooker are required in any kitchen not only to save fuel but also time. A look at the data shows that of the total sample only 45.90 per cent households have **stove** in their kitchen. This information need to be looked at separately for the two regions since there is disparity in them. In the NE, only 30.55 per cent households use stove while in the Deccan this percentage is significantly higher, that is, 61.26. The data shows that 30.56 per cent households use kerosene for cooking purposes while the number of households having stove is 61.26 per cent in the Deccan but only 4.03 per cent households there use kerosene.

Pressure cooker is another essential component of the kitchen irrespective of the type of fuel one uses even though its effectiveness and efficiency must be highest with the LPG, followed by stove and least with fuel wood. It is for the said

reason that we find 71.39 per cent households using this gadget for cooking at both the places. Once again like the above kitchen item (stove) its distribution is skewed in the two regions. If 87.59 per cent households use pressure cooker in the NE it is much lower in the Deccan, 55.20 per cent only. These figures of use of stove and pressure cooker are suggestive of the levels of poverty that one finds afflicting the Sikh communities there, more so in the Deccan compared to the NE. The Sikligar community seems to lower this ratio there.

If the above items of food and cooking are essential for survival, **fan and coolers** are no luxuries either when the level of technological development and comfort levels are on the rise in the neighbouring areas. 72.47 per cent households in the total sample have fans. This means that 27.6 per cent households are still without fans. Barring Shillong which has a relatively cooler climate being in the hills, all other places in the field of study are hot and humid as well. Moreover, in Shillong too residential houses and offices have installed air conditioners. The inter-regional break up shows that 65.55 per cent households in the NE and 79.40 per cent in the Deccan own fans. The relatively better economic position of the respondents in the NE but lower proportion of fans may be due to the population of sample residing at a hill station in Shillong which has the reputation of being the Switzerland of the east.

The geographical location of the NE with high rainfall and high humidity including the hill station (Shillong) calls for the ineffectiveness of the **air coolers** which is why there are only three coolers in the whole sample of 540 households. It makes only 0.55 per cent households there. On the other hand, in the Deccan there are 88 coolers, that is, 18.66 per cent households only and that too in the hot and dry weather of the plateau there. Once again it is indicative of high incidence of

poverty that there are mere 91 coolers in the whole population comprising of 1011 households. It is mere 8.7 per cent households.

The story of electric supply all over the country is same. No state has that surplus electricity as to make it full time available to its people and at cheap rates. It happens other way around that there may be 'power cuts' in one's own state but the neighbours are sold to fill the emptied state treasury. If the power cuts are frequent and tripping of electric supply is a perennial feature then the use of **inverters** in households is an index of this malaise and of the heightened comfort level of the people as is the case in Punjab. Conversely, the lack of inverters is also an indicator of poverty of population and their lower comfort level. Despite poverty in the NE and also due to the cool climes of Shillong in particular and due to a significant proportion of the agricultural households living in the villages of Nagaon where people are more accustomed to live with and in nature as compared to the city people, there are only 6.3 per cent households that use inverters. That does not sound to be a very poor proportion given the above mentioned factors. The poverty of the Deccan Sikhs is once again reflected in the data that shows only six households having inverters out of a total sample population of 471 households.

Having earned the day's living doing hard work, rest is absolutely essential for an individual so that she may get up fresh again charged for the new day's work. The culture of sleep is peculiar to each society. Some prefer to sleep on the floor, some on a **cot or bed** etc. which are also the markers of one's social status. The present study shows quite interesting results such that only five households in the total sample of the NE have cots while 490 have beds that accounts for 90.65 per cent households in the region. The corresponding figures for the other region namely Deccan is 348 (out of 471) or 73.77 per cent households having cots and

only 109 or 23.10 per cent households having beds. The inter-regional differences are also starkly visible such that in the NE the culture of using cots is almost nil while in the Deccan smaller percentage of households have beds.

The respondents have difficulty making difference between the cots and beds. They are informed that cots are the traditional netted *charpai* or *khat* or what is more likely to be understood differently as a folding *charpai* in the present times whence the wooden bars are replaced by metallic pipes or rods. The bed refers to the wooden cot with a plywood plank replacing the net and a mattress made of cotton, choir or foam over it. In popular parlance 'beds' refer to a pair of such beds that are fixed together. It may be the simple ones or the box beds.

Entertainment is an important component of today's society. It would not be an exaggeration to state that today's society is an 'entertainment society'. Each and every person is glued to such gadgets that keep delivering songs and music of a sort around the clock. One may see youngsters especially with plugged ears whatever they may be doing and wherever they may be. The radios and tape recorders gained prominence in that order earlier but now both of these are in decline. The radio used to cater to a common person's entertainment but now these have become virtually obsolete. Interestingly, only 7.02 per cent households in the whole sample have **radio sets** while the number of those households that have **cassette recorders** is further lower, a mere 0.2 per cent. The radio surely has a wider variety of programmes for entertainment that is restricted to mainly songs in the cassettes.

Now both of these have been phased out by more superior and compact instruments that are multifunctional. For instance, a **mobile cell phone** performs

multiple functions and a large storage of songs is one among many other functions. One does not have to carry a gadget simply for one function but hear one's choicest selection of music or songs without disturbing anyone, putting on the ear phones etc. 85.52 per cent households have mobile phones in the total sample that comes out to be 90.37 per cent in the NE and 80.67 per cent households in the Deccan. The modern mobile phone, a product of the information and communication technology has not only phased out the earlier instruments of music and entertainment but has completely wiped out the land line telephones. Just seven out of 1011 households (0.69 per cent) in the sample have land line telephones and all of these are in the Deccan. There is not a single household in the NE that has a land line telephone connection. The mobile phone has also eliminated the compact disc (CD) players. Only 10.08 per cent households in the sample have CD players with Deccan people having double the number of such players compared to the NE.

In today's society under the spell of information and communication technology given the media proliferation life does not seem to be complete without **television**, so people think. It may be called an 'idiot box' by some and an apparatus of the state for manipulating peoples' tastes and attitudes but its possession and viewing are certainly on the ascending scale. Arundhati Roy writes in 'Walking with the comrades' that a senior police officer told her that an easy way to fight the Maoists in the tribal red corridor is to install a television in each house. One can understand the significance of this mode of entertainment for the powers that be. Any slum colony anywhere in the country may lack the basic of the basic amenities but it never falls short of the television antennae and dishes. The situation is no different in the two regions of the present study where poverty looms large on the heads of the sample households. Of the total sample, 76.33 per cent households

302

possess the television sets and there are not much inter-regional differences. The percentage of households with television is two per cent higher than the average in the NE but two per cent less in the Deccan.

This study is also interested in observing the **mode of transport**, local and otherwise that is owned by the households. If 18.52 per cent households in the NE do not own a vehicle, the figure is much higher in case of Deccan where it stands at 40.98 per cent. The number of households in the total sample that do not own a vehicle comes out to be 28.98 per cent. Those who own a scooter or a motor cycle are 42.73 per cent and the data between two regions is highly comparable, 41.85 per cent in the NE and 43.74 per cent in the Deccan. Only 5.34 per cent households own cars which too is not starkly different between regions. The big difference however lies in the ownership of a bicycle which stands at 20.38 per cent for all the households in the sample. In terms of regional proportion, 31.67 per cent households in the NE (it is wholly in Assam) own it while the corresponding percentage in the Deccan is 7.43 per cent. This is understandable in the sense that leaving the capital town population in the NE, large sample living in villages of Nagaon use bicycle as the mode of transportation in the village.

Table 29: Type of vehicle

Group/Sub Group	Bicycle		Scoot/Bike		Car		Rickshaw		None		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region											
1. N.E.	171	31.67	226	41.85	33	6.11	10	1.85	100	18.52	Chi ² =120.13** C=0.33;
2. Dakhan	35	7.43	206	43.74	21	4.46	16	3.40	193	40.98	
Income Group (Th)											
1. Up to 5	71	22.68	79	25.24			6	1.92	157	50.16	Chi ² =241.46** C=0.44;
2. 5-14	107	24.37	199	45.33	9	2.05	10	2.28	114	25.97	
3. Above 14	28	10.81	154	59.46	45	17.37	10	3.86	22	8.49	
ALL DATA											
All Data	206	20.38	432	42.73	54	5.34	26	2.57	293	28.98	

Ownership of **cattle** by the tribal or rural population is also an important variable though it is almost impossible in a metropolis like Hyderabad or in the congested colonies of Gora Line and Barra Bazar of Shillong or of Dispur or Marakhali in Guwahati that is why 76.26 per cent households in the sample do not have any cattle. The remaining 15.92 per cent households have cows and 4.75 per cent have goats. Looking for inter-regional differences it is observed that 95.75 per cent households in the Deccan have none of the cattle – cow or goat whereas the corresponding percentage in the NE is 59.26. However, 29.07 per cent households there and it is true of the Axomiya Sikhs only living in rural Assam that own a cow or more while 6.30 per cent have a goat or more. There are only 3.07 per cent households that have

Table 30: Cattle

Group/Sub Group	Goat N	%	Cow N	%	All N	%	None N	%	
Region									
1. N.E	34	6.30	157	29.07	29	5.37	320	59.26	Chi ² =195.71**(df:3) C=0.40;
2. Dakhan	14	2.97	4	0.85	2	0.42	451	95.75	
Income Group (Th)									
1. Up to 5	9	2.88	34	10.86	3	0.96	267	85.30	Chi ² =48.84**(df:6) C=0.21;
2. 5-14	19	4.33	99	22.55	23	5.24	298	67.88	
3. Above 14	20	7.72	28	10.81	5	1.93	206	79.54	
ALL DATA									
All Data	48	4.75	161	15.92	31	3.07	771	76.26	

both cow and goat. Surprisingly there are only four households that have a cow. It is mere 0.85 per cent of the Deccan sample. It is also interesting to note that income levels are strangely influencing the ownership of cattle. If we take the case of cow owners, the households with the lowest and the highest incomes per month are

similar, 10.86 per cent and 10.81 per cent but in the middle income group there are 22.55 per cent households.

The legacy of old life styles of living with **pets** is described above in the case of Manna Singh of Mortad near Nizamabad who himself has no space to live yet he owns a dog and a pair of hen. The rich people own them for status and entertainment yet the poor ones have them for being a part of living with nature. In the modern day market society afflicted with high price rise and inflation it is becoming all the more difficult to own pets just out of economic compulsions. It is now more a hobby of the affluent. The data shows that if 71.32 per cent households do not have pets at all there are 9.20 per cent households that have many pets that may include any of the cat, dog or hen etc. in combination. A further peep into the data reveals that if 82.11 per cent households in the lowest income group have no pet there are 67.95 per cent households without them in the highest income group of more than Rs. 14,000 per month.

Table 31: Pets

Group/Sub Group	Cat N	%	Dog N	%	Hen N	%	Other N	%	Many N	%	None N	%
Region												
1. N.E	2	0.37	14	2.59	137	25.37	5	0.93	90	16.67	292	54.07
2. Dakhan	1	0.21	22	4.67	14	2.97	2	0.42	3	0.64	429	91.08
Income Group (Th)												
1. Up to 5	2	0.64	7	2.24	35	11.18	2	0.64	10	3.19	257	82.11
2. 5-14			12	2.73	88	20.05	3	0.68	48	10.93	288	65.60
3. Above 14	1	0.39	17	6.56	28	10.81	2	0.77	35	13.51	176	67.95
ALL DATA												
All Data	3	0.30	36	3.56	151	14.94	7	0.69	93	9.20	721	71.32

Inter-regional variations in this regard are also significant. There are 54.07 per cent households in the NE that have no pets compared to 91.08 per cent households in the Deccan. Only 4.67 per cent households there have dogs while the

same figure for the NE is mere 2.59 per cent. This number should have been higher compared to the Deccan since 19.07 per cent households there are engaged in agriculture and reside in rural areas while the corresponding figure in the Deccan is mere 1.91 per cent (cf. Table No. 11). It seems due to the culture of Sikligar community that more pets are reported from the Deccan. A dog does not need special enclosure or space while the hen need which is why their number is large in the NE, that is, 25.37 per cent households have hen while 2.97 per cent households only have hen in the Deccan. In the NE and especially in Assam, there are 16.67 per cent households that have more than one type of pet which is due to the agricultural occupation who may have a cow, bulls, dog or hen etc. On the other hand there are only three households or 0.64 per cent in the Deccan that have many pets.

The **family assets** are also a significant measure of one's socio-economic status. We have focus on two main types of assets that is, land and shop since these have appeared most in the data. It is found that if 31.26 per cent households have land and 6.43 per cent households have a shop there are 61.62 per cent households that do not own assets of any kind whatsoever. Those households that have both the assets with them are a meagre 0.69 per cent.

Table 32: Family assets

Group/Sub Group	Land N	%	Shop N	%	Both N	%	None N	%	
Region									
1. N.E	283	52.41	23	4.26	5	0.93	229	42.41	Chi ² =244.76** (df:3) C=0.44;
2. Dakhan	33	7.01	42	8.92	2	0.42	394	83.65	
Income Group (Th)									
1. Up to 5	63	20.13	12	3.83	2	0.64	236	75.40	Chi ² =46.17** (df:6) C=0.21;
2. 5-14	161	36.67	24	5.47	4	0.91	250	56.95	
3. Above 14	92	35.52	29	11.20	1	0.39	137	52.90	
ALL DATA									
All Data	316	31.26	65	6.43	7	0.69	623	61.62	

Inter-regional variations do surface here as well. The difference is most conspicuous either in the case of land holders or those that have none with them. There are 42.41 per cent households in the NE that fall in this category but the number is much higher in the case of Deccan. The population possessing land is also high in the case of NE since there are 52.41 per cent households but there is steep fall in the case of land owners in the Deccan. It is only 7.01 per cent. Since the community of Sikhs at both places are not belonging to the trading castes, shops are owned only by 4.26 per cent households in the NE and 8.92 per cent in the Deccan. The level of poverty may be further assessed from the fact that only 0.69 per cent households in the total sample have land and shop both. The ratio of land owners is higher in the NE due to the component of Axomiya Sikhs of Nagaon district that are engaged in agriculture. One may doubt the authenticity of data collection when one looks at the table showing 52.90 per cent respondents in the top income group of Rs. 14,000/- per month who have neither land nor shop. It is due to the government employment of the Sikhs in Shillong and especially in the NE where they are not allowed to buy land or property.

So far the question of material and physical needs are concerned we have seen above all the essential elements in the households of the Sikhs in the North-East and the Deccan. Besides these material components of existence what is more important for human existence is the mental wellbeing and having a sense of meaningfulness and realization at the place of his habitation. One assumption that is underlying the present research is to study the **local character** of Dakhani and Axomiya Sikhs. This information may be drawn by posing such questions that may help us draw an inference in this regard such as, since when are they putting up

there? Who are their neighbours? How do they relate to them? Do they visit houses, religious places and social functions etc. of the members of other communities? What do they eat and wear? The questions about the language of their communication at home and outside have already been discussed above. From their responses to such like questions we may draw inferences about their entrenchment in the local culture and society. Thus the first thing to know from the respondents in this set of relevant questions is about their **stay at the place** of their present residence since all other responses shall flow from there. The very duration of residence is an important indicator in this regard.

Table 33: Since when staying at the place of present residence

Group/Sub Group	Since Birth		15 Yrs++		15 Yrs		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1. N.E	508	94.07	29	5.37	3	0.56	Chi ² =333.29**(df:2) C=0.50;
2. Dakhan	196	41.61	149	31.63	126	26.75	
Income Group (Th)							
1.Up to 5	164	52.40	79	25.24	70	22.36	Chi ² =68.42**(df:4) C=0.25;
2. 5-14	340	77.45	66	15.03	33	7.52	
3.Above 14	200	77.22	33	12.74	26	10.04	
ALL DATA							
All Data	704	69.63	178	17.61	129	12.76	

The concerned table (No. 33) shows that out of 1011 households 69.73 per cent respondents are residing at the same place since their births while 12.76 per cent and 17.61 per cent respondents are residing there for the last 15 and more than that respectively. Thus we find that 87.34 per cent respondents have been the residents of that area for more than 15 years that by itself is an important pointer in the direction of determining one's local character.

The regional variations are also important to note which are quite prominent. Quite expectedly 94.07 per cent respondents in the NE reply that they are staying there since birth while the corresponding figure for the Deccan is 41.61 per cent. This lower proportion may be due to the nomadic character of the tribal communities especially the Sikligars and the Banjaras or Lambadas. Now they are trying to settle down at a place like the colony at Ranga Reddy District which is yet not fully occupied.

The proportion of Dakhani Sikhs staying there for the last 15 years and more comes out to be 58.38 per cent. This argument is validated by another observation that the respondents with low income of up to Rs. 5,000 per month are less sticking to the place of their birth since their number is 52.40 per cent while those having more than Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 14,000 and beyond include 77.45 per cent and 77.22 per cent respondents respectively.

When the **father's residence** (see Table No. 34) of the head of the household is enquired, it is informed that 56.28 per cent fathers live(d) at the same place as the respondent herself. The remaining 43.72 per cent fathers resided at some other place. Fathers of 65.64 per cent respondents in the highest income group of Rs. 14,000 and above resided at the same place. Once again there are regional variations that are worth noticing. In the case of NE, 66.85 per cent respondents informed that their fathers are living at the same place where they are while this figure for the Dakhani Sikhs is 44.16 per cent.

Table 34: Place of father's residence

Group/Sub Group	Same Place		Other Place		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	361	66.85	179	33.15	Chi ² =52.64** (df:1) C=0.22;
2. Dakhan	208	44.16	263	55.84	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	142	45.37	171	54.63	Chi ² =25.28** (df:2) C=0.16;
2. 5-14	257	58.54	182	41.46	
3. Above 14	170	65.64	89	34.36	
ALL DATA					
All Data	569	56.28	442	43.72	

The proportion of those fathers who reside at some other place is 33.15 per cent in case of the NE while this number is much higher (55.84 per cent) in the case of Deccan. Sociologically speaking, when people are residing at a place since birth, they tend to stay with their own people. Social ecology also informs us about this aspect of human settlements.

If the substantially large majority of respondents are residing at the same place as their fathers for long, it generates curiosity in the mind to know who their **immediate neighbours** are. Are these members of their own community or some other? 81.21 per cent respondents reply living with own community in the total sample at both the places of study viz. NE and the Deccan (see Table No. 35). If we add up those who have both, that is, their own as well as members of other communities, the total goes up to 84.57 per cent respondents which is quite a significant number of people who live with the people of their own community, following the dictum – Birds of a feather flock together. Social ecology also attests

310

Table 35: Community of immediate neighbour

Group/Sub Group	Own		Others		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	446	82.59	94	17.41	Chi ² =12.87**(df:2) C=0.11;
2. Dakhan	409	86.84	62	13.16	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	279	89.14	34	10.86	Chi ² =10.12*(df:4) C=0.10;
2. 5-14	367	83.60	72	16.40	
3. Above 14	209	80.70	50	19.30	
ALL DATA					
All Data	855	84.57	156	15.43	

this togetherness. Only 15.43 per cent respondents have members of other communities as their immediate neighbours. Very interestingly there is no regional variation on this count between two culturally, historically and socially diverse regions of India namely, NE and the Deccan. The proportion of respondents hovers around 81 per cent which is precisely 80.93 per cent respondents in the NE and 81.53 per cent in the Deccan.

It is informed that when the soldiers of the Sikh army stayed back in the NE and the Deccan, they married local women. That was about two centuries ago. Now there is substantial population of the Sikhs themselves at both the places which is why it is reported that 70.03 per cent **respondents' mothers** belong to the Sikh community. The tribal people in the sample such as Sikligar, Banjara or Lambada are also Sikhs in every sense of the term and they marry within their communities, they make 17.51 per cent and 1.78 per cent respondents respectively. If we combine them the above percentage jumps up to 89.32 per cent respondents who may be clubbed together under the column 'Sikh community'. This leaves about 10 per cent respondents who may have mothers from other communities but there are 5.93 per cent respondents whose mother's have been returned as belonging to the

Punjabi community. All of these are the respondents from the NE, the *safai karamcharis* to be precise and these are Sikhs too. Thus the total number of mothers belonging to the Sikh community comes to 95.25 per cent.

The inter-regional variations show that 80.00 per cent respondents' mothers belong to the Sikh community while there are 58.60 per cent in the Deccan. The remaining belong to the tribal communities of Sikligars (37.58 per cent) and Banjara or Lambada (3.18 per cent). The absence of Sikh tribals in the NE is substituted by those belonging to the Punjabi and Axomiya/Khasi communities accounting for 11.11 and 8.33 per cent respondents respectively.

Table 36: Mother's community

Group/Sub Group	A N	%	P N	%	S N	%	SKL N	%	B/L/Other N	%
Region										
1. N.E	45	8.33	60	11.11	432	80.00			3	0.56
2. Dakhan	3	0.64			276	58.60	177	37.58	15	3.18
Income Group (Th)										
1. Up to 5	17	5.43	15	4.79	156	49.84	111	35.46	14	4.47
2. 5-14	25	5.69	29	6.61	328	74.72	54	12.30	3	0.68
3. Above 14	6	2.32	16	6.18	224	86.49	12	4.63	1	0.39
ALL DATA										
All Data	48	4.75	60	5.93	708	70.03	177	17.51	18	1.78

A = Assamese; P = Punjabi; S = Sikh; SKL = Sikligar; B- Banjara; L- Lambada

The mothers of 11.11 per cent respondents returned as Punjabi belong to the community of Mazhabi Sikhs (*safai karamcharis*) though most of them are clean shaven yet call themselves Sikhs. An insignificantly small minority of those have converted to Christianity that may be included under the head of others whose number is mere 0.56 per cent in the NE. These 11.11 per cent have been labelled as Punjabi simply for the reason that at the time of their marriage they were in Punjab, born and brought up there, hence Punjabi. Thus these are Sikhs for all

practical purposes thus raising the number of respondents' mothers belonging to the Sikh community to 91.11 per cent.

A feature that marks off the Sikhs in the NE from those in the Deccan is that the former register 8.33 per cent respondents whose mothers are local women, that is, non-Sikhs, hence Axomiya or Khasi primarily as in Assam and Meghalaya respectively. The marriages with local women are not common because these are not encouraged by the community but it does happen these days given the liberal milieu in the NE as compared to the Deccan.

Sociologically speaking there is difference between the concepts of community and religion though people at large seem to confuse between the two and consider them as synonyms. We tried to maintain this difference and do claim success to some extent. A clear cut distinction is made between the Sikh and Hindu religions though some have also returned their religion as tribal –Sikligar and others like Banjara and Lambada– or some as Punjabi and Christian. The table (N0. 37) shows that 92.68 per cent respondents' mothers' religion is Sikh while 5.24 per cent respondents are Hindu and the remaining little are the tribal people named above.

Table 37: Mother's religion

Group/Sub Group	H		S		SKL		L,P,B,CH	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region								
1. N.E	44	8.15	492	91.11			4	0.74
2. Dakhan	9	1.91	445	94.48	10	2.12	7	1.49
Income Group (Th)								
1. Up to 5	20	6.39	277	88.50	7	2.24	9	2.88
2. 5-14	25	5.69	409	93.17	3	0.68	2	0.46
3. Above 14	8	3.09	251	96.91				
ALL DATA								
All Data	53	5.24	937	92.68	10	0.99	11	1.09

Chi²=31.73** (df:3)
C=0.17;

Chi²=25.87** (df:6)
C=0.16;

H = Hindu; S = Sikh; SKL = Sikligar; P = Punjabi; L = Lambada; B = Banjara; CH- Christian

Analysing the table No. 37 showing mother's religion shows hardly any difference between those in the NE and the Deccan but when the question of Hindu religion and tribal population is considered there is difference. The tribals in the latter region account for 3.61 per cent respondents who have returned their tribal identity as their religion. The field work has informed us that all of these are Sikhs and subscribe to this religion in spirit and form. If their strength is added up to the 94.48 per cent Sikhs in the Deccan, the figure touches the 98.09 per cent mark. Interestingly, there are only 1.91 per cent respondents there whose mothers are Hindu while the corresponding number in the NE is 8.15 per cent. This number however matches with the 8.33 per cent respondents' mothers belonging to the Hindu community.

A person's **mother tongue** is best confirmed from the language of her mother. Since the present study is also interested in examining the acculturation and adaptation of Sikhs whose forefathers moved there about two centuries ago, it would be of interest to inquire into the language of the mother of the respondents since we have already looked into the communal and religious identities of them. We have also examined above different issues relating to the use of language by the respondent at home and outside. Information about the respondent's mother shall provide more details in the issue of language of the Sikhs in the NE and the Deccan. Given the distribution of sample spread over five states that had been marked out on linguistic bases in the NE and the Deccan both, we come across a wide range of languages spoken by the mothers. Thus it has been clubbed under certain broad heads in the table No. 42. It shows that no single language dominates the sample. The highest position is bagged by Axomiya but that too is 32.54 per cent followed by Punjabi (16.82 per cent). The mothers speaking Hindi and Telgu

314

and some other language follow very closely at 16.82 and 16.52 per cent respectively. Interestingly there are only 2.57 per cent mothers of the respondents who combine some language with Axomiya and this would be nothing but Hindi. In the Deccan, Sikligars have returned their own language Sikligari which is spoken by 14.64 per cent mothers.

The total sample shows almost equal distribution of respondents' mothers' language hovering around 16 per cent but for the Axomiya at 32.54 per cent. There are, however, differences worth noting between the two regions. The share of Axomiya in the language distribution both in the region that is NE and the total sample is largest. It is 60.37 per cent. This is followed by Hindi spoken by 35.67 per cent while 31.63 per cent speak Telgu in combination with some other language in the Deccan. 31.42 per cent there speak Sikligari while 31.11 per cent speak Punjabi in the NE. In the Deccan there are only 0.64 per cent respondents' mothers who speak Punjabi. Hindi only is the language of only two mothers in the NE whose proportion in the NE sample is mere 0.37 per cent. On the contrary the picture in the Deccan is different where majority respondents' mothers' language is Hindi (35.67 per cent). There are 44 respondents' mothers who combine some other language with Axomiya. They make 8.14 per cent only of the NE sample.

Table 38: Mother's language

Group/Sub Group	A		H		P		S		A+Other		T+Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region												
1. N.E	326	60.37	2	0.37	168	31.11			44	8.14		
2. Dakhan			171	36.31	3	0.64	148	31.42			149	31.63
Income Group (Th)												
1. Up to 5	71	22.68	46	14.70	32	10.22	93	29.71			72	23.00
2. 5-14	175	39.86	72	16.40	80	18.22	43	9.79	6	1.37	64	14.58
3. Above 14	83	32.05	55	21.23	59	22.78	12	4.63	20	7.72	31	11.97
ALL DATA												
All Data	326	30.84	173	17.11	171	16.91	148	14.64	26	2.57	167	16.52

A = Axomiya; H = Hindi; P = Punjabi; S = Sikligari; T = Telgu

When the **mother's language** is related to the **levels of income** of the household one glaring observation may be noticed and that is for all languages in the whole sample except Sikligari where there is tendency to stick to one's own language even as income levels rise. When we ascend the income level from the first to the third level, that is, lowest to the highest one, the rise in Axomiya speaking mothers is from 22.68 per cent to 32.05 per cent; for Hindi it is from 14.38 per cent to 20.85 per cent; for Punjabi from 10.22 per cent to 22.78 per cent respectively. But this tendency is reversed in the case of Sikligari, sliding from 29.71 per cent to mere 4.63 per cent. Given the information that we have, it remains inexplicable but for the conjecture that Sikligari is more of a dialect than a language which is suitable for intra-tribal communication that is bound to disappear when the income levels rise as their children go to school.

Table 39: Wife's community

Group/Sub Group	A		B/H/L		P		S		SKL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region										
1. N.E	113	23.74	7	1.47	39	8.19	317	66.60		
2. Dakhan	1	0.23	21	4.82			245	56.19	169	38.76
Income Group (Th)										
1. Up to 5	26	9.41	16	5.84	10	3.65	118	43.07	104	37.96
2. 5-14	54	13.53	6	1.50	21	5.26	265	66.42	53	13.28
3. Above 14	34	14.23	6	2.51	8	3.35	179	74.90	12	5.02
All Data	114	12.50	28	3.07	39	4.28	562	61.62	169	18.53

A = Assamese; B= Banjara; H= Hindu; L= Lambada; P= Punjabi; S= Sikh; SKL= Sikligar

After looking into the linguistic ancestry of the respondent that may inform us about the social milieu of the family and the respondent's socialisation, it becomes imperative to know the same about their own family and children, thus asking about the respondent's **wife's community** and **religion** hence shifting the focus of

observation and analysis from one's family of orientation to one's family of procreation. An attempt is made to know the similar details about the wife of the respondent as we obtained from the respondent's mother.

Once again the respondents confused the two terms, community and religion, as at above. These have been used synonymously by the respondents, for instance, when they say 23.74 per cent respondents' wives' community is Axomiya, they mean by this they are Hindu (see Table Nos. 39 and 40). Whatever data has been collected shows that barring 9.79 per cent respondents who are unmarried, the wives belonging to the Sikh community preponderate. It is 61.62 per cent. All other communities lag far behind just as Sikligars are 18.53 per cent, followed by Axomiya 12.50 per cent, Punjabi at 4.28 per cent respondents while the Banjara/lambada including Hindu constitute merely 3.07 per cent.

The regional variations are also conspicuous for the simple reason that the nature of communities is different in the two regions. What is common between the two regions is the preponderance of wives from the Sikh community, 66.60 per cent in the NE and 56.19 per cent in the Deccan. The Sikligar community dominates the rest with 38.76 per cent respondents followed by Axomiya and Punjabi in the NE with 23.74 per cent and 8.19 per cent respondents respectively.

A relation of the above variable with levels of income is also telling. The tendency to marry within one's own community rises with the rise in levels of income which is most conspicuous in the case of Sikhs. If there are 43.07 per cent respondents' wives who belong to the Sikh community, the number jumps up to 74.90 per cent respondents as the income level rises from lowest to the highest

level, that is, from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 14,000 per month and above. This trend is reversed when the respondents belong to the tribal community. The case of Punjabi community is not affected by this factor for the *safai karamcharis* of Dispur/Guwahati and Shillong marry the Punjabis only, exceptions of course are there.

The **religious distribution of respondent's wives** also shows interesting patterns. Once again as expected, the Sikh religion dominates with 83.88 per cent respondents' wives belonging to it followed by Hindu religion with 13.60 per cent. The regional variations are there. We find that 74.79 per cent respondents' wives in the NE subscribe to the Sikh religion while the corresponding figure in the Deccan is 93.81 per cent. The Hindu percentage there is merely 2.52 per cent while it is 23.74 per cent in the NE. The number of the unmarried is also higher there (11.85 per cent) compared to 7.43 per cent respondents in the Deccan.

Table 40: Wife's religion

Group/Sub Group	H		S		SKL		L/Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region								
1. N.E	113	23.74	356	74.79			7	1.47
2. Dakhan	11	2.52	409	93.81	9	2.06	7	1.61
Income Group (Th)								
1. Up to 5	31	11.31	230	83.94	5	1.82	8	2.92
2. 5-14	54	13.53	338	84.71	3	0.75	4	1.00
3. Above 14	39	16.32	197	82.43	1	0.42	2	0.84
ALL DATA								
All Data	124	13.60	765	83.88	9	0.99	14	1.54

H= Hindu; S= Sikh; SKL= Sikligar; L= Lambada

A look at the **respondent's wives' language** table (No. 41) shows that there is greater range of languages spoken by them as compared to their mothers-in-law.

This is understandable since the younger generation is relatively more educated and exposed and also move out of home more frequently than their parents especially mothers. This exposure compels them to gain expertise in the use of different languages, hence this relatively wider range. Despite this factor, those who use one language their number is definitely larger than those who use more than one. For the overall sample the pattern is the same as for mother's language. It means Axomiya speakers dominate with 36.44 per cent, followed by Sikligari (18.97 per cent), Hindi (18.31 per cent) and Punjabi (16.12 per cent). The remaining respondents' wives speak two and more languages.

Table 41: Wife's language

Group/Sub Group	A		H		P		S		H+OTHER		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region												
1. N.E	331	65.76			144	30.25	8	1.68	42	8.82	15	3.15
2. Dakhan	1	0.23	167	38.30	3	0.69	165	37.84	97	21.56	38	8.72
Income Group (Th)												
1. Up to 5	67	24.45	47	17.15	28	10.22	104	37.96	40	14.59	27	9.85
2. 5-14	176	44.11	67	16.79	69	17.29	51	12.78	61	15.29	15	3.76
3. Above 14	89	37.24	53	22.18	50	20.92	18	7.53	38	15.90	11	4.60
ALL DATA												
All Data	332	36.40	167	18.31	147	16.12	173	18.97	139	15.24	53	5.81

A= Axomiya; H= Hindi; P= Punjabi; S= Sikligari

If we look at the data in terms of region, we find that in the NE 65.76 per cent speak Axomiya, 30.25 Punjabi and the rest of the respondents' wives speak a mix of two or more languages. These numbers however are quite small. The linguistic diversity is more in the Deccan where Hindi and Sikligari speakers are 38.30 and 37.84 per cent respectively. Those who combine Hindi with Marathi are 10.55 per cent due to the concentration of Dakhani Sikhs at Nanded while others combining Hindi with Telgu are 8.49 per cent. Those who speak Punjabi only are mere 0.69 per cent.

A further peep into the localisation of the present generation is to look into the marital alliances they seek for their **sons** and **daughters**. Likewise, as above for the respondents' mothers and wives, their community, religion and language dimensions are also explored. These figures shall only allude towards the trend since a larger proportion of households remain out of this purview since this query does not apply to them as their daughters are not married yet. This proportion is large, 73.99 per cent for the whole sample; 79.81 per cent respondents in the NE and to 67.30 per cent in the Deccan. Whatever remaining sample has responded is better analysed region-wise rather than collectively. In the NE, 33.03 per cent sons-in-law belong to the Axomiya community, 62.39 per cent to the Sikh community and 3.67 per cent to either Punjabi or Hindu community. In the Deccan on the other hand 56.49 are Sikhs, 40.26 per cent are Sikligar and there is not a single son-in-law from a Punjabi or Hindu community.

Table 42: Son-in-Law's community

Group/Sub Group	A		S		SKL		P/H	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region								
1. N.E	36	33.03	68	62.39	1	0.91	4	3.67
2. Dakhan	5	3.25	87	56.49	62	40.26		
Income Group (Th)								
1. Up to 5	10	13.33	31	41.33	32	42.67	2	2.67
2. 5-14	20	20.20	53	53.54	25	25.26	1	1.01
3. Above 14	11	12.36	71	79.78	6	6.74	1	1.12
ALL DATA								
All Data	41	15.59	155	58.94	63	23.95	4	1.52

A= Assamese; S= Sikh; SKL= Sikligar; P= Punjabi; H= Hindu

The case of the **sons-in-law's religious affiliation** is not much different. 80.61 per cent respondents' sons-in-law are affiliated to the Sikh religion and 17.11 per cent to the Hindu religion while this question does not apply to the remaining 73.99 per cent respondents in the sample. The regional differences are also

320

noticeable. In the NE there are only 63.30 per cent Sikhs and in the Deccan this number is more than double, that is, 92.86 per cent. In the NE, the percentage of Hindu sons-in-law is 35.18.

When we look at the **language(s) used by the sons-in-law** there is no specific language that dominates the distribution of the sample. In the NE, 60.55 per cent respondents are Axomiya speakers, 21.10 per cent are Punjabi speakers and the remaining 17.43 per cent respondents communicate in many languages. In the case of Deccan, 37.66 per cent respondents speak Hindi and 32.47 per cent Sikligari. Interestingly, compared to the NE where 17.43 per cent speak many languages in the Deccan the number of respondents' sons-in-law is 28.57 per cent who use many languages.

Table 43: Son in Law (Language)

Group/Sub Group	A		H		P		S		Many	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region										
1. N.E	66	60.55			23	21.10	1	0.92	19	17.43
2. Dakhan			58	37.66	2	1.30	50	32.47	44	28.57
Income Group (Th)										
1. Up to 5	12	16.00	19	25.33	2	2.67	24	34.00	18	24.00
2. 5-14	30	30.30	21	21.21	6	6.06	19	19.19	23	23.23
3. Above 14	24	26.97	18	20.22	17	19.10	8	8.99	22	24.72
ALL DATA										
All Data	66	25.09	58	22.05	25	9.51	51	19.39	63	23.95

A= Axomiya; H= Hindi; P= Punjabi; S= Sikligari

The **occupations of the respondents' sons-in-law** is very varied but the majority of them perform the metal works which means that all of these belong to the Sikligar community while the remaining are engaged in small business, that is, 33.46 per cent, followed by job or service (23.19 per cent). The inter-regional differences are not very prominent since at the NE and the Deccan, the number of those in

business stands at 42.20 per cent and 27.27 per cent respondents respectively while in job or in service the corresponding figures are 28.44 per cent and 19.48 per cent respondents respectively. In agriculture, the Axomiya Sikhs have the larger share of 12.84 per cent respondents while in the Deccan only 2.60 per cent respondents are engaged in it.

Table 44: Son in Law (Occupation)

Group/Sub Group	Met. Work N %	Labour N %	Driver N %	Self Emp. N %	Agricult. N %	Priest N %	Job/Serv. N %
Region							
1. N.E	10 9.17	1 0.92	6 5.50	46 42.20	14 12.84	1 0.92	31 28.44
2. Dakhan	62 40.26	1 0.65	12 7.79	42 27.27	4 2.60	3 1.95	30 19.48
Income Group (Th)							
1. Up to 5	37 49.33	1 1.33	5 6.67	20 26.67	4 5.33	1 1.33	7 9.33
2. 5-14	25 25.25		7 7.07	29 29.29	9 9.09	2 2.02	27 27.27
3. Above 14	10 11.24	1 1.12	6 6.74	39 43.82	5 5.62	1 1.12	27 30.34
ALL DATA All Data	72 27.38	2 0.76	18 6.84	88 33.46	18 6.84	4 1.52	61 23.19

If 73.99 per cent daughters (Table No. 45) of the respondents are not married in the sample there is still greater number of sons who are in the same category. They make 79.13 per cent. Hence the proportion of the **daughters-in-law** is quite small, that is, 20.87 per cent only. Whatever their number, 55.92 per cent belong to the Sikh community, 26.07 per cent are Sikligar, 14.22 per cent Axomiya, 3.19 per cent Punjabi but none from the Hindu community. When it comes to their religion, 84.83 per cent claim to belong to the Sikh religion besides those who claim themselves to be Sikligar etc. Adding up all it makes the total to 86.26 per cent.

(322)

Table 45: Daughter-in-law's community

Group/Sub Group	A/H		P		S		SKL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region								
1. N.E	24	24.49	7	7.14	67	68.37		
2. Dakhan	6	5.31	1	0.88	51	45.13	55	48.67
Income Group (Th)								
1. Up to 5	9	18.00	2	4.00	14	28.00	25	50.00
2. 5-14	15	17.44	3	3.49	44	51.16	24	27.91
3. Above 14	6	8.00	3	4.00	60	80.00	6	8.00
ALL DATA								
All Data	30	14.22	8	3.19	118	55.92	55	26.07

A= Assamese; H= Hindu; P= Punjabi; S= Sikh; SKL= Sikligar

Looking at their inter-regional variations we find that the number of unmarried sons is higher (81.85 per cent) in the NE as compared to the Deccan (76.01 per cent). Of these 75.51 per cent are Sikhs in the NE and 92.92 per cent in the Deccan. When we inquire about their language there is no concentration of speakers of a particular language these are fairly distributed over all the major languages named by the respondents. In the NE, 69.39 daughters-in-law speak Axomiya and 24.49 per cent speak Punjabi. In the Deccan on the other hand, 42.48 per cent speak Hindi while 38.05 per cent subscribe to Sikligari (language). Punjabi is the language of a small minority of 1.77 per cent daughters-in-law there. In the total sample the Punjabi speakers are very few, mere 12.32 per cent. This is once again due to the presence of the Punjabi *safai karamcharis* in the NE who speak this language at home. Interestingly there is none in the NE who has returned Hindi as her language.

After analysing information about the language of the respondents, their mothers, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law which is an important measure of one's cultural and regional affiliations, it would be pertinent to look into one's **dress code** which is also a significant element in the above direction. On the basis of dress one may immediately decipher the community and sometimes even religion of a person which is especially true in case of women more than men. For instance, a Punjabi women's common attire is *salwar-kameez* while that of a Hindu is *saree* and trousers or skirt etc. for a Christian as in the NE. The present study is interested in probing the dress patterns that may allude towards the social moorings of the respondents and their family members.

The information on this issue has been collected under three heads – local, Punjabi and both. For the benefit of reader it may be mentioned that local dress would mean the dominant dress of the region that may be a saree or trousers or skirts etc. By Punjabi we refer to *salwar-kameez* which is also the prescribed dress code of Sikh women in Punjab and elsewhere. The information is also sought under the 'mixed' and 'both' heads. By 'both' we mean Punjabi and the local dresses worn separately on different occasions. For instance, a woman may wear a *salwar-kameez* at home but adorns a saree when going out to the market or cinema. She may also wear a skirt or trousers in routine but when she goes to a gurdwara she wears *salwar-kameez* and so on. On the other hand, by mixed dress we mean wearing jeans with a *kurta* or having a *dupatta* with jeans or trousers etc.

324

Table 46: Women's dress

Group/Sub Group	Local		Punjabi		Both/Mixed		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1.N.E	175	32.41	166	30.74	199	36.85	Chi ² =60.78**(df:2) C=0.24;
2.Dakhan	77	16.35	109	23.14	285	60.51	
Income Group (Th)							
1.Up to 5	89	28.43	81	25.88	143	45.69	Chi ² =12.45*(df:4) C=0.11;
2. 5-14	119	27.11	120	27.33	200	45.56	
3.Above 14	44	16.99	74	28.57	141	54.44	
ALL DATA							
All Data	252	24.93	275	27.20	484	47.87	

For the compactness of the table the 'both' and 'mixed' or some other variant have been clubbed. Thus we have for the total sample, 47.87 per cent women wear both the Punjabi and local dresses. 24.93 per cent women wear local dress and 27.20 per cent Punjabi. Region-wise break up shows that if 32.41 per cent wear local in the NE, only 16.35 per cent do so in the Deccan. At the latter place 23.14 per cent wear Punjabi dress while the figure for the former stands at 30.74 per cent. This is largely due to the Punjabi background of the *safai karamcharis* at Shillong and Guwahati/Dispur. Those who support both dresses are significantly higher in the Deccan (60.51 per cent) as compared to the NE where 36.85 per cent women do so.

The case of **food and cooking** is also like the above an important indicator of one's regional and cultural dispositions. The present study like the dress code mentioned above looks at three categories of food, that is, Punjabi, local and mixed. For the total sample, the corresponding figures are 16.02 per cent, 53.81 per cent and 30.17 per cent respectively but there are inter-regional variations. If Punjabi

food is cooked in 28.52 per cent households in the NE, 1.70 per cent households only do so in the Deccan. On the other hand, 78.34 per cent households there take local food while 19.96 per cent have the mixed type. In the case of NE, 39.07 per cent households go for the mixed type and 32.41 per cent for the local food. Once again high proportion of Punjabi style food cooking may be attributed solely to the presence of *safai karamcharis* there who keep strong connections with Punjab and Punjabi culture.

Table 47: Food and cooking

Group/Sub Group	Local		Punjabi		Mixed		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1. N.E	175	32.41	154	28.52	211	39.07	Chi ² =242.06**(df:2) C=0.44;
2. Dakhan	369	78.34	8	1.70	94	19.96	
Income Group (Th)							
1. Up to 5	218	69.65	35	11.18	60	19.17	Chi ² =49.58**(df:4) C=0.22;
2. 5-14	217	49.43	77	17.54	145	33.03	
3. Above 14	109	42.08	50	19.31	100	38.61	
ALL DATA							
All Data	544	53.81	162	16.02	305	30.17	

When the food consumption patterns are related to the levels of income it becomes clear that more people in the low income group consume local food, in this case 69.65 per cent, 11.18 per cent take Punjabi and the remaining 19.17 per cent take mixed food. This pattern is reversed as income levels rise from Rs. 5,000 per month to Rs. 14,000 per month and above. In the latter category 42.08 per cent take local, 19.31 per cent have Punjabi and the remaining 38.61 go for the mixed food.

The above parameters of social and material existence tell us about the regional adaptation and acculturation of Sikhs in the NE and Deccan. The above mentioned insights into the study are further deepened by probing more questions relating to their **intra-community** and **inter-community interactions**. As expected

326

sociologically that 'migrant' communities tend to be closed ones and derive social strength from their social solidarity, it would be relevant to enquire into the range and frequency of intra-communal interaction patterns. Thus a question is posed to the respondents to find out at what level –mohalla, village, city, region or state– do they meet in a month?

It is observed that the Sikhs wherever they are whether in the NE or the Deccan, in a big metropolis like Hyderabad with 6.81 million population in 2011 and Guwahati with a million people or villages like Barkola in Assam, clustering is significant. Besides the physical clustering of their houses in the form of colonies and mohallas, social clustering is also important in their lives which is meant to serve many ends like emotional and social solidarity, social and religious functions and also for political purposes to make things easy for their living in a land distant from 'home'. We have seen above that 84.57 per cent respondents in the whole sample live with the members of own community (see Table No. 48). Now we are interested in knowing the frequency of their formal meetings more for socio-political purposes in the sense of discussing issues concerning their day to day living.

Table 48: Interaction with own community (six monthly)

Group/Sub Group	Mohalla		Village		City		Region		N.A.		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region											
1. N.E	11	2.04	235	43.52	207	38.33	78	14.44	9	1.67	Chi ² =358.56** C=0.51;
2. Dakhan	22	4.67	4	0.85	420	89.17	7	1.49	18	3.82	
Income Group (Th)											
1. Up to 5	17	5.43	48	15.34	219	69.97	20	6.39	9	2.88	Chi ² =30.16** C=0.17;
2. 5-14	10	2.28	125	28.47	250	56.95	45	10.25	9	2.05	
3. Above 14	6	2.32	66	25.48	158	61.00	20	7.72	9	3.47	
ALL DATA											
All Data	33	3.26	239	23.64	627	62.02	85	8.41	27	2.67	

There are certain variations between the two regions. Since these people are living in social clusters the question of their meetings in a month does not assume

any significance and the responses to this question had been negligible and of no sociological consequence since they are living and interacting each day of the week morning and evening. Moreover there are so many occasions of religious importance that those celebrations inevitably bring the whole community together, not only of the mohalla or city but of the surrounding region as well. Thus another question with longer time span (six months) makes more sense.

Table No. 48 tells that that for the whole sample only 2.67 per cent respondents do not answer this question. The rest who meet once in six months include 3.26 per cent at mohalla level, 23.64 per cent at village level, 62.02 per cent at the city level. 8.41 per cent respondents answer meeting at the regional level. The inter-regional variations are important. The village level meetings attended by 43.52 per cent respondents solely belong to the NE which is virtually absent in the Deccan. On the other hand, 38.33 per cent respondents meet at the city level in the NE at the while 89.17 per cent respondents do so in the Deccan. The respondents in the NE (14.44 per cent) hold meetings at the regional or state level whereas there are only 1.49 per cent such respondents in the Deccan.

If that is the scene at the level of interaction within the Sikh community, it would be interesting to look at the **pattern of inter-community interaction** since the Sikhs are believed to be Punjabis and yet not carrying the label of not belonging to the place of their residence. Thus it is befitting to know what is the level of interaction with local community(ies)? That would tell us about the level and quality of their interaction in that milieu and hence a measure of their adaptability and adjustment in a different social milieu. They do carry the image of being very helpful and engaging people who have a tendency to make each place their home where ever they live. Their adaptability is also phenomenal.

328

The overall data of 1011 respondents shows (Table No. 49) that 14.34 per cent respondents often visit members of other communities, 35.81 per cent do so sometimes while 37.39 per cent visit others only when invited. However there are 12.46 per cent respondents who do not visit other households of other communities. This interaction pattern becomes more meaningful when we look at the data on basis of two regions. In the NE 24.63 per cent respondents often visit others while 57.96 per cent respondents do so sometimes only and a small number, that is, 13.52 per cent visit them only when invited. They do not expect formal invitation for visiting persons of other communities while those in the Deccan are much given to this formal invitation. 64.76 per cent respondents fall in this category. Strangely 22.29 per cent respondents there do not visit other communities in comparison to just 3.89 per cent in the NE. There are only 10.40 per cent respondents in the NE who do so sometimes only.

Table 49: Visit other community

Group/Sub Group	Often		Sometime		Invited		No		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region									
1. N.E	133	24.63	313	57.96	73	13.52	21	3.89	Chi ² =489.47**(df:3) C=0.57;
2. Dakhan	12	2.55	49	10.40	305	64.76	105	22.29	
Income Group (Th)									
1. Up to 5	30	9.58	75	23.96	138	44.09	70	22.36	Chi ² =72.15**(df:6) C=0.26;
2. 5-14	76	17.31	167	38.04	154	35.08	42	9.57	
3. Above 14	39	15.06	120	46.33	86	33.20	14	5.41	
ALL DATA									
All Data	145	14.34	362	35.81	378	37.39	126	12.46	

The reasons could be many but what comes easily is the effect of the metropolitan culture of Hyderabad that has definitely become more formal with modernisation and globalisation and more so the increasing constraints of the market society that tends to confine everybody to one's family and home. The other

could be that Dakhani Sikhs as a progeny of Sikh soldiers of the Nizam's Irregular Troops enjoying the state privileges have their inflated egos. None thinks oneself inferior to the other and each one believes that going to some one's place without invitation is nothing but humiliation. But more important than that seems to be the modern culture of market society that has made every one busy. It is often remarked as here as well: 'We wish to meet but there is no time.' It is well put in colloquial Punjabi; '*Milna tan chaune aan, time hi'ni milda.*'

The question of reciprocating and **inviting others** is also posed to the respondents. A significantly large majority of 91.30 per cent respondents in the total sample reply affirmatively. This also speaks about the open heartedness of the Sikhs. Like their gurdwara open to all the people all the time, they too keep the doors of their houses open to people of other communities. There are 8.70 per cent respondents only who do not invite members of other communities.

Table 50: Invite others

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1.N.E	529	97.96	11	2.04	Chi ² =64.84** (df:1) C=0.25;
2.Dakhan	394	83.65	77	16.35	
Income Group (Th)					
1.Up to 5	262	83.71	51	16.29	Chi ² =32.90** (df:2) C=0.18;
2. 5-14	415	94.53	24	5.47	
3.Above 14	246	94.98	13	5.02	
ALL DATA					
All Data	923	91.30	88	8.70	

Inter-regional variations are also worth noting at this level. In the NE, those who invite others are a larger number still, that is, 97.96 per cent which falls down to 83.65 per cent in the Deccan. It seems the openness of the Sikh heart is enhanced by the liberal character of the NE society. This level of interaction increases with

increase in the income level of the household. For the overall data 83.71 per cent respondents up to an income of Rs. 5,000 per month invite others while those above that income level up to Rs. 14,000 and beyond touch higher marks of 94.53 per cent and 94.98 per cent respectively. This may be due to better economic condition because entertaining others involves expenditure as in the Indian culture that the guest is deemed to be an angel hence no stone is left unturned in taking care of him or her, what is called *mehman nawazi*.

The above information pertains to social visitation at the inter-community level. What is the pattern of **visiting the religious places** of other communities is further probed. It only attests to the communal solidarity between different religious communities though its absence does not necessarily reflect any hostility between them. People in India have the culture of tolerance and allowing other religions space for their development what Mahatma Gandhi terms as '*sarva dharma sambhava*'. The respondents too, on further probing inform that 'it is not due to our ill will or hatred against them or their religion that we do not go there but out of respect for their religious institution that may not get violated due to our ignorance.'

Table 51: Visit religious places of other communities

Group/Sub Group	No		Often		Sometime		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1. N.E	117	21.67	38	7.04	385	71.30	Chi ² =30.84**(df:2) C=0.17;
2. Dakhan	174	36.94	37	7.86	260	55.20	
Income Group (Th)							
1. Up to 5	106	33.87	37	11.82	170	54.31	Chi ² =22.36**(df:4) C=0.15;
2. 5-14	115	26.20	24	5.47	300	68.34	
3. Above 14	70	27.03	14	5.41	175	67.57	
ALL DATA							
All Data	291	28.78	75	7.42	645	63.80	

Following from the above table (No. 51) of inter-community visits and inviting members of other communities to one's house, there are 28.78 per cent respondents who do not visit the religious places of other communities. Out of the remaining, 63.80 per cent respondents visit only sometimes while it is quite a frequent activity with 7.42 per cent respondents. It is interesting that for the 'often' category there is hardly much difference between the respondents of the two regions but variations are significant when it comes to other responses like 'no' and 'sometimes'. There is also a positive correlation with the levels of income. The respondents of the low income group (33.87 per cent) are not willing to visit the religious places of other communities compared to the 27.03 per cent respondents in the high income group of more than Rs. 14,000 per month. Those who visit sometimes only are 54.31 per cent and 67.57 per cent respondents respectively.

This is the picture of the overall data for 1011 respondents. In the NE 21.67 per cent respondents do not visit religious places of other communities while 71.30 per cent visit these places sometimes only as per table No. 51. The corresponding figures for the Deccan are 36.94 per cent and 55.20 per cent respectively. They are relatively more orthodox and conservative than those in the NE where the rural peasant is by temperament more liberal and one may say casual about religion and its ritualistic observances but greater number seems to be due to the fact that the *safai karamcharis* of Shillong and Guwahati/Dispur believe both in Sikhism and are Balmiks who have a Balmik temple along with a gurdwara in their colony and all of them not only visit the two religious places but also celebrate respective occasions zealously. It is the problem of classification between a temple and a gurdwara that makes the difference than any demarcation or division in the peoples' minds. There is another dimension to it in the NE, that of the Church and Christianity. As already

mentioned there are certain Punjabi Christians and converts as well who do visit these places besides going to the Church that they have to. For these reasons, I believe, the proportion of respondents going to religious places of other communities is high in the NE which is not the case in Deccan.

Let us now shift from the material to the mental. Having discussed patterns of food consumption let us now examine the food for thought that pertains to the domain of **religion**. It is important to see how these Sikhs far away from home take to their religion which is manifestly different from other religions in the sense of giving a definitely different form and appearance that is visible from a distance and without revealing one's own identity. How many Sikhs there are maintaining their appearance prescribed by their religion? What patterns emerge from the field? What are the patterns of observing their religious rituals, festivals and functions etc.? What type of interaction they have with other religions and religious communities etc.? Such like and other questions have been framed in the questionnaire to look into the religious orientation and interaction with other religions and communities. How far the dominant religions like Hinduism which is common at both the places of study, and Christianity as in the NE especially at Shillong and Islam in Hyderabad and around have influenced the Sikhs there? What impact the local religious practices and customs have on them?

Sikh Religious Orientation makes an important aspect of the present study especially in the wake of Operation Blue Star and the subsequent all India killings of Sikhs for their alleged involvement in the shooting of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, including the killing of six Sikh students at Bidar in 1987. One of the basic definition of a Sikh is that s/he must have faith in the Guru Granth Sahib, the

scripture of the Sikhs and s/he must believe in all the Sikh gurus. We may have two broad types of Sikhs, one *amritdhari*, the baptised ones who have the complete form with *kesh*, *kirpan* and three other *kakars* (Ks) (see below). Others are *sahajdhari*, who have the above mentioned faiths but not the *kesh* or the Sikh form. Thus by definition a Sikh must have faith in Guru Granth Sahib, keep some of the five (Ks) *kakars*, visit a gurdwara etc. to mention the seminal features. This popular perception of a Sikh is dominated by one with *kesh* or uncut hair.

The data collected tells that all the 1011 respondents answered positively the question about their belief in the Sikh gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib. Not a single case including those who have converted to Christianity in the NE answered in the negative. They make 540 in the NE and 471 in the Deccan.

Table 52: Believe in Guru Granth Sahib

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Region				
1. N.E	540	100.0		
2. Dakhan	471	100.0		
Income Group (Th)				
1. Up to 5	313	100.0		
2. 5-14	439	100.0		
3. Above 14	259	100.0		
ALL DATA				
All Data	1011	100.0		

Then how many of them visit the gurdwara the sacred institution where Guru Granth is recited and worshipped. There are a number of patterns in the lives of Sikhs on the question of the frequency of visits to the gurdwara and their frequency. There is a sort of variety and inter-regional variations as well. Of the total sample, 58.56 per cent respondents visit the gurdwara daily, 28.49 per cent respondents go

weekly and 4.15 per cent monthly while 8.31 per cent respondents visit sometimes only. It validates the above observation of their belief in the Guru Granth Sahib and in the gurdwara thus attesting the significance of the *panth* and the *Granth* in Sikhism. An infinitely small proportion of 0.49 per cent respondents do not visit the Sikh place of worship (see Table No. 53).

Table 53: Visit Gurudwara

Group/Sub Group	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Sometime		NO	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region										
1.N.E	283	52.41	196	36.30	35	6.48	23	4.26	3	0.56
2.Dakhan	309	65.61	92	19.53	7	1.49	61	12.95	2	0.42
Income Group (Th)										
1. Up to 5	163	52.08	92	29.39	16	5.11	38	12.14	4	1.28
2. 5-14	260	59.23	129	29.38	18	4.10	31	7.06	1	0.23
3. Above 14	169	65.25	67	25.87	8	3.09	15	5.79		
ALL DATA										
All Data	592	58.56	288	28.49	42	4.15	84	8.31	5	0.49

There are also clear regional variations in this aspect of the Sikh respondents' behaviour. The Sikhs in Deccan with 65.61 per cent respondents are ahead of their counterpart in the NE (52.41 per cent respondents) in visiting the gurdwara daily whereas they (36.30 per cent) excel those (19.53 per cent) in the Deccan in the weekly visits to their place of worship. There are more number of respondents in the NE (6.48 per cent) than those in the Deccan (1.49 per cent) who pay monthly visits only while the latter's percentage is higher (12.95 per cent) than the former (4.26 per cent) in visiting the gurdwara sometimes only.

When the number of visits by the respondents is related to the levels of income of the households an interesting observation is made that, but for the daily visitors income levels do not make much difference. In this case respondents with lowest income of up to Rs. 5,000 per month are 52.08 per cent that goes up to 59.23

per cent as income rises to Rs. 14,000 and still higher to 65.25 per cent with income levels higher than that, that is, above Rs. 14,000 per month.

Since all respondents in the sample are Sikhs who are practicing Sikhism in a social milieu where the culture and society including the dominant religions there are different, it is pertinent to seek the influence of the surroundings on their observance of rituals. Are they able to maintain the purity of the rituals prescribed in Sikhism else there are **local influences** on them. The table No. 54 shows that only 2.08 per cent respondents in the total sample agree that local influences are strong on them yet there are 19.98 per cent respondents who mix the Sikh rituals with the local ones. This category implies that these respondents make a blend of the two pure types. The majority of them (77.94 per cent) however stick to the Sikh rituals. The regional variations are also significant in these two –Sikh and mixed– categories. In

Table 54: Rituals performed

Group/Sub Group	Local		Sikh		Mixed		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1.N.E	5	0.93	343	63.52	192	35.56	Chi ² =179.07**(df:2) C=0.39;
2.Dakhan	16	3.40	445	94.48	10	2.12	
Income Group (Th)							
1. Up to 5	14	4.47	255	81.47	44	14.06	Chi ² =25.80**(df:4) C=0.16;
2. 5-14	6	1.37	324	73.80	109	24.83	
3. Above 14	1	0.39	209	80.69	49	18.92	
ALL DATA							
All Data	21	2.08	788	77.94	202	19.98	

Deccan 94.48 per cent respondents perform the Sikh rituals while in the NE their number is 63.52 per cent only. It is in the NE that the local and Sikh rituals both are mixed in the religious ceremonies by these people. Out of the total 19.98 per cent respondents performing mixed rituals those in NE count for 35.56 per cent while those in Deccan are mere 2.12 per cent.

One difference that marks off the NE from the Deccan is that observance of Sikh rituals is followed by 63.52 per cent households only. It is about 31 percentage points less compared to the Deccan. The reason seems to lie in that the Axomiya Sikhs living in the country side marrying local women have been influenced by the local tradition. The case of Deccan is different where almost all people are keeping the form prescribed in Sikhism. Besides the Dakhani Sikhs, Sikligars are more orthodox than them about the Sikh form and they have the stories to attest to this fact that they are very orthodox in the matter of keeping the Sikh form. The Banjara Sikhs are not only the converts but they also preach and recite *Gurbani* (Text of the Guru Granth Sahib) in the gurdwaras, hence the significance of the Sikh form for them.

Besides these factors, greatly significant contribution is made by the location of the Sach Khand Hazoor Sahib at Nanded, one of the most important takhts of this religion and in the whole of South India. It not only draws Sikh devotees and pilgrims from all over the globe in millions, but this gurdwara is a major source of employment to the Sikhs there. It serves food free (*langar*) to thousands of people each day of the year. Those in the service of the gurdwara in one capacity or other are ordained to maintain the Sikh form.

Another important issue may be the tendency of the Sikhs there is to cash upon their identity that has earned them name and fame thus far, at least in the Deccan. Whenever and whoever one may talk to, Dakhani Sikhs narrate the Nirmal story very fondly and proudly. 'Our ancestors did not accept the *jagir* of Nirmal given

to them by the Nizam of Hyderabad for their meritorious services. They rolled the *shahi farman* into the muzzle of a gun and blew that off,...' Such self-perception of honour and dignity still keeps them in high spirits besides the *chardikala* of Khalsa. The jathedar of Hazoor Sahib is also a Dakhani Sikh and a *brahmachari* (presently Jathedar Kulwant Singh) and they have their own religious practices that are different from those prescribed and practised by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) at Amritsar (Punjab). They are also particular about such observances and sensitive too about them and consider these a mark of their identity.

Besides Gurdwara Sach Khand Hazoor Sahib there is another historic gurdwara of Nanak Jhira at Bidar associated with Guru Nanak. It was never that big a couple of years ago but now it has grown into a large institution running own school, hospital and seminary etc. besides the Guru Nanak Engineering College whose president is also the president of the gurdwara management. These major institutions associated with Sikhism encourage others to adopt Sikhism giving them employment, health and educational services. The case of Banjara Sikhs adopting Sikh religion and becoming its preachers and launching own *kirtani jathas* is no less significant.

Such institutions of that scale and prestige are not present in the NE. Moreover these are not easily accessible to the Sikhs outside. Gurdwara Damdama Sahib at Dhubri and Gurdwara Mata Ji at Chaparmukh are most important there that are visited by Sikhs from all over the NE at least once in a year as explained in

Chapter III above. It is quite paradoxical that Dhubri town has only three Sikh families now and all the sewadars there (in 2012) are from Bihar called Bihari Sikhs even though the manager is a Punjabi Sikh from Guwahati. Another reason could also be the unorthodoxy of the rural peasant Sikhs of Nagaon district. A peasant by temperament is neither that conservative nor orthodox as an urbanite belonging to the trading community.

Another factor also prevails in the NE that is not present in the Deccan, namely the large proportion of *safai karamchari* population there who are Sikhs no doubt and claim to be so but least concerned about the Sikh form which is also their wont in Punjab. Majority of them are clean shaven but by name and belief they are Sikhs and they subscribe both to the temple of Guru Balmik as well as the Sikh gurus and the gurdwara. At their localities in Meghalaya and Assam these twin religious institutions –temple and gurdwara– always co-exist. And they claim to revere them equally and celebrate the respective *purabs* with equal zeal and enthusiasm. Not only this, some among them also subscribe to Christianity. Some who have gone from Punjab are originally Christian but some have also adopted this faith because this is the dominant one in Shillong at least to avail the state benefits in terms of scholarships, health services and employment etc.

The belief in Guru Granth Sahib and visit to their place of worship is further consolidated by the community with the celebration and participation of ***gurpurabs***, the religious festivals commemorating the guru. The responses here too have been

almost in the absolute. Only 0.30 per cent respondents reply in the negative which of course is of no consequence. It makes only three respondents out of 1011.

Table 55: Celebrate gurpurabs

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	540	100.0			
2. Dakhan	468	99.36	3	0.64	Chi ² =3.45(df:1) C=0.06;
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	311	99.36	2	0.64	
2. 5-14	438	99.77	1	0.23	
3. Above 14	259	100.0			Chi ² =2.08(df:2) C=0.05;
ALL DATA					
All Data	1008	99.70	3	0.30	

In the Sikh religion those people who have taken *amrit*, that is, *Khande di pahul* as in north India have superior religious status since they have the grace of the Waheguru. Such Sikhs are very particular about *rehat maryada* prescribed for them. They must keep the five Ks or *kakar* that are *kesh* (uncut hair), *kanga* (comb), *kirpan* (sword), *kada* (steel bracelet) and *kachha* (long breeches). In the Deccan, two kinds of *amrit* are partaken by the devotees, one of *khande di pahul* and other one of *kirpan*. It is informed by the respondents that the latter type is usually given to women and its observance is relatively lax compared to the *khande di pahul*. Now some men too take this type of *amrit*. The respondents are conscious of the fact that partaking *amrit* is not difficult but its observance is, which is why they say: 'We have not taken *amrit* since violating that is greater sin than not taking it.'

Table 56: Taken *amrit*

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	493	91.30	47	8.70	Chi ² =46.16**(df:1) C=0.21;
2. Dakhan	356	75.58	115	24.42	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	228	72.84	85	27.16	Chi ² =41.77**(df:2) C=0.20;
2. 5-14	391	89.07	48	10.93	
3. Above 14	230	88.80	29	11.20	
ALL DATA					
All Data	849	83.98	162	16.02	

A look at the table No. 56 informs that 83.98 per cent respondents have taken *amrit*. This proportion is significantly higher in the NE where 91.30 per cent respondents have taken it while it is only 75.58 per cent in the Deccan. On the other hand, there are 16.02 per cent respondents who have not taken *amrit*. Out of these larger proportion of such Sikhs in the Deccan is 24.42 per cent while that in the NE is 8.70 per cent. This variable is also positively related to the levels of income. The number of *amritdharis* increases with rise in income, from 72.84 per cent respondents in the lowest income group to 88.80 per cent in the highest one of more than Rs. 14,000 per month.

The following of Sikh religion and observing its tenets, the *rehat maryada* are also crucial questions that need to attest one's belief in Sikh religion. Here one comes to notice that despite all the positive responses to the above questions when it is asked: 'Do you support **five Ks** (*kakar*)?' 62.81 per cent respondents answer affirmatively while 37.19 per cent respondents negatively for the total data. When

Table 57: Support (Ks) *kakar*

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	351	65.00	189	35.00	Chi ² =2.38(df:1) C=0.05;
2. Dakhan	284	60.30	187	39.70	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	155	49.52	158	50.48	Chi ² =42.68**(df:2) C=0.20;
2. 5-14	284	64.69	155	35.31	
3. Above 14	196	75.68	63	24.32	
ALL DATA					
All Data	635	62.81	376	37.19	

inter-regional variations are noticed that are not very prominent, relatively more Sikhs (65.00 per cent) in the NE support the five Ks than in the Deccan (60.30 per cent). The corresponding figures for not supporting the five Ks are also similar across the two regions, that is, 35.00 per cent and 39.70 per cent respondents respectively.

A relation of this query with income shows that those who support five Ks, their numbers rise with income levels, for instance, 49.52 per cent respondents have monthly income up to Rs. 5,000 per month, 64.69 per cent have up to Rs. 14,000 and as it goes beyond that level the number shoots up to 75.68 per cent respondents. On the other hand those who do not support five Ks, a reverse relation is visible clearly. 50.48 per cent respondents have income level up to Rs. 5,000 per month, 35.31 per cent have up to Rs. 14,000 and 24.32 per cent respondents have still higher income.

We know from the table (No. 56) above that 83.98 per cent respondents have taken *amrit* while 62.81 per cent (see Table No. 57) support *kakar* (the five Ks), it requires further probing into these responses that if they do support all the five Ks

342

and call themselves Sikhs then what type of *kakar* do they support? It is observed that 53.51 per cent respondents in the total sample support all the five Ks. This percentage is lower (40.93) in the NE but higher in the Deccan (67.94). The greater share in the lowering of this percentage in the NE goes to the *safai karamcharis* there who have small proportion of respondents with apparently Sikh form of having a turban and beard. Majority of them are clean shaven. I am told during the field work that the trend of keeping the Sikh form is now picking up with their youth who are taking *amrit* as well. Yet their number is conspicuously small.

Table 58: Supporting *kakar*, the five Ks

Group/Sub Group	Kesh		Kada		Some		All Five		N.A.	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region										
1. N.E	72	13.33	28	5.19	37	6.85	221	40.93	182	33.70
2. Dakhan	5	1.06	2	0.42	112	23.78	320	67.94	32	6.79
Income Group (Th)										
1. Up to 5	28	8.95	7	2.24	75	23.96	149	47.60	54	17.25
2. 5-14	40	9.11	15	3.42	52	11.85	232	52.85	100	22.78
3. Above 14	9	3.47	8	3.09	22	8.49	160	61.78	60	23.17
ALL DATA										
All Data	77	7.62	30	2.97	149	14.74	541	53.51	214	21.17

Those respondents who support not all five Ks but some in the total sample is 14.74 per cent. Once again as expected their number is lower (6.85 per cent) in the NE and higher (23.78 per cent respondents) in the Deccan. How about others who claim to support *kakar* yet are out of the categories listed above? Then it is thought to be prudent to look into those numbers who support only *kesh* and *kada*. 7.62 per cent respondents support *kesh* (hair) only while 2.97 per cent support only *kada*, the steel bracelet. There is greater variation between the NE and the Deccan on this count. 13.33 per cent respondents keep *kesh* and 5.19 per cent respondents wear *kada* in the NE while the corresponding figures for the Deccan are 1.06 per cent and

0.42 per cent respondents respectively. At the same time there are 33.70 per cent respondents in the NE and 6.79 per cent respondents in the Deccan who reply that this does not apply to them. A comparison between the two tables Nos. 57 and 58 show that there is correspondence between the percentages of not supporting the five Ks and the case of no application but the information for the Deccan is at variance.

It is also prescribed in the Sikh religion that Gurbani should be recited by the Sikh each day morning and evening. The day must begin and end with Gurbani recitation. It is part of *rehat maryada*, the daily code of conduct. When a pointed question is asked on the recitation of Gurbani on each day of the week (see Table No. 59), 61.82 per cent respondents give an affirmative answer while 38.18 per cent do not do so. This phenomenon is also positively related to the levels of income, that is, as the income level rises so does the percentage of those who recite Gurbani. It takes a jump from 48.56 per cent to 75.29 per cent respondents as income rises from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 14,000 and above per month.

Table 59: Recite Gurbani every day

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	321	59.44	219	40.56	Chi ² =2.77(df:1) C=0.05;
2. Dakhan	304	64.54	167	35.46	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	152	48.56	161	51.44	Chi ² =43.64**(df:2) C=0.20;
2. 5-14	278	63.33	161	36.67	
3. Above 14	195	75.29	64	24.71	
ALL DATA					
All Data	625	61.82	386	38.18	

It is also important to note if the respondents are not reciting Gurbani, are they disposed towards it, as also about *katha* and *kirtan*, at least in terms of listening to it in this age of information and technology when there are huge facilities through numerous electronic and digital gadgets to avail the facility of listening to the music of your choice. No wonder as Table No. 58 shows that 71.22 per cent respondents in the total sample listen to it on television while 7.81 per cent respondents use compact disc players (CDP) or cassette recorders for this purpose. But there are 20.97 per cent respondents who do not listen to Gurbani and *katha* or *kirtan* at all. On this count surprisingly there are no inter-regional differences. These differences are also not that significant in terms of hearing Gurbani but only at the level of using a medium like a CD player or a cassette recorder. In the NE, if 77.41 per cent respondents listen to *kirtan* on television and 2.22 per cent on CD players or cassette recorders, in the Deccan 64.12 per cent respondents use television and 14.23 per cent use other media respectively.

Table 60: Listen Gurbani – *katha/kirtan*

Group/Sub Group	TV		CD/Cassette		No		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Region							
1. N.E	418	77.41	12	2.22	110	20.37	Chi ² =52.82**(df:2) C=0.22;
2. Dakhan	302	64.12	67	14.23	102	21.66	
Income Group (Th)							
1. Up to 5	174	55.59	19	6.07	120	38.34	Chi ² =105.76**(df:4) C=0.31;
2. 5-14	326	74.26	31	7.06	82	18.68	
3. Above 14	220	84.94	29	11.20	10	3.86	
ALL DATA							
All Data	720	71.22	79	7.81	212	20.97	

In relation to income levels there is positive relation between the two variables, that is, listening to Gurbani and *katha or kirtan* on a higher version of technology. If 55.59 per cent respondents belonging to the lowest income group see television this number rises to 84.94 per cent for the highest income group of Rs. 14,000 and more per month. But there are 11.20 per cent respondents in this group who also use CD players and cassette recorders but there are only 3.86 per cent respondents who do not listen to Gurbani at all. This number of non-listeners is highest (38.34 per cent respondents) in the lowest income group of less than Rs. 5,000 per month.

As flora and fauna need the ecological and environmental conditions for their best growth so do human institutions and their practices require a definite type of social milieu to flourish. The question of maintaining the Sikh form and distinct identity especially after 1984 whence there is rise in the clash of identities within the nation itself, it becomes relevant to inquire into this aspect of one's religious identity and other functions like celebration of religious festivals etc. which all are a part of **believing** and **practising Sikhism** in the South and the North-East India. Thus the respondents are given a more pointed and direct question: 'Do you have difficulty in believing and practising Sikhism?' Contrary to our expectations, 97.53 per cent respondents answer this question negatively. It is a healthy trend indeed indicating communal harmony and national integration in the country where communalism and social conflicts are on the rise. There is hardly any inter-regional variation on this aspect (see Table No. 61).

Table 61 : Difficulty in practicing Sikhism

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E.	16	2.96	524	97.04	Chi ² =1.15(df:1) C=0.03;
2. Dakhan	9	1.91	462	98.09	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to	9	2.88	304	97.12	Chi ² =2.69(df:2) C=0.05;
2. 5-14	7	1.59	432	98.41	
3. Above 14	9	3.47	250	96.53	
ALL DATA					
All Data	25	2.47	986	97.53	

Undertaking pilgrimage is an important component of all religions in the country. It cleanses the body and mind and increases social solidarity amongst the pilgrims. *Tirath yatra* has special significance in the lives of devotees. Sikhs are also given to undertake pilgrimage to the five takhts countrywide and to other gurdwaras of historic importance. It is thus pertinent to enquire into this aspect of the Dakhani and Axomiya Sikhs. What are the ways and means of their pilgrimage and what patterns emerge from them? Table No. 62 shows that 85.16 per cent respondents in the sample undertake pilgrimage while others who do without it are 14.84 per cent. The proportion of Dakhani Sikhs (97.24 per cent) in this regard is higher than those in the NE which is 74.63 per cent. This means there are 25.37 per cent respondents in the NE who do not undertake any pilgrimage to the Sikh places of worship. This percentage is extremely small (2.76 per cent) in the Deccan. It is very likely due to the presence of historically famous gurdwaras there associated with the first and the last gurus that have become centres of attraction to Sikhs the world over hence the local people too get motivated to visit these compared to the NE where there is only one gurdwara at Dhubri Sahib that commemorates the collective memory of the Guru Nanak and Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Table 62: Undertake pilgrimage

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	403	74.63	137	25.37	Chi ² =101.78**(df:1) C=0.30;
2. Dakhan	458	97.24	13	2.76	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	265	84.66	48	15.34	Chi ² =19.23**(df:2) C=0.14;
2. 5-14	355	80.87	84	19.13	
3. Above 14	241	93.05	18	6.95	
ALL DATA All Data	861	85.16	150	14.84	

In the Deccan Sikhs undertake pilgrimage to Nanded and Bidar frequently and almost regularly though very few have come to Harmandar Sahib at Amritsar though each one expresses a strong desire to come to this place for *darshana*. The Sikhs in the NE visit once a year Gurdwara Damdama Sahib at Dhubri and Gurdwara Mata Ji at Chaparmukh, the two centres of pilgrim attraction in the NE. But the Sikhs there too harbour similar sentiments though not that strong as their counterpart in the Deccan about Harmandar Sahib and other historical gurdwaras in the north India.

When this variable is related to levels of income there is definite positive correlation between the two and rightly so since it is a matter of economic investment which is why most people lament: 'We want to visit Darbar Sahib and other *dhams* in Punjab but there is no money with us.' If 84.66 per cent respondents belonging to the lowest income group of up to Rs. 5,000 per month undertake pilgrimage, 93.05 per cent respondents do so who fall in the top level in this sample of Rs. 14,000 and above. The rich transporters come to the rescue of the poor in helping them undertake pilgrimage. It is common practice with them to ply their vehicles –buses and trucks– to ferry pilgrims especially of economically weaker

sections to the centres of pilgrimage on special occasions definitely. It is their way of taking out *dasvand*, partaking with the tenth part of their income in the service of people and religion.

After examining the religious orientation of the Sikhs in terms of their commitment to Sikh religious beliefs and practices, it is the turn of their cultural orientation and to observe how far they are connected to Punjab or Punjabi culture that we may address as **Punjabi cultural orientation**. There must have been more hurdles in this connectivity earlier but in this age of information technology, this is the first thing or facility that is available to people anywhere in the world, not to talk of at some distant place in one's own country. Thus connectivity is not an issue anymore. The present study is thus interested to see what type of connection, to what extent and of what type is existent between the Sikhs there and the land and culture of their ancestors.

The most visible aspect of Punjabi culture as also of others is songs. Listening to the **Punjabi songs** is now acquiring a pan-Indian status. It would be no exaggeration to state that it is increasingly getting internationalised when world famous pop stars like Shakira are planning to sing to its tunes and Bhangra acquires a high rating on the British Broadcasting Corporation channels. The truck operators playing these songs ply all over the country and the way side dhabas also do so to create the Punjabi ambience at a place far off from Punjab for the Punjabi transporters. The bhangra and giddha beats are enamouring populace all over the country and also beyond. In such a milieu how do Sikhs who are culturally cut off from the Punjab soil are trying to keep their umbilical cord alive and kicking.

Table 63: Listen Punjabi songs

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	440	81.48	100	18.52	Chi ² =70.21**(df:1) C=0.25;
2. Dakhan	270	57.32	201	42.68	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	166	53.04	147	46.96	Chi ² =70.82**(df:2) C=0.26;
2. 5-14	327	74.49	112	25.51	
3. Above 14	217	83.78	42	16.22	
ALL DATA					
All Data	710	70.23	301	29.77	

Surprisingly 29.77 per cent respondents do not listen to the **Punjabi songs** and this percentage is quite higher (42.68) in the Deccan compared to that in the NE which is 18.52 per cent only. I am not able to figure out an explanation to this anomaly which could have been otherwise. In the NE, the residents of villages like Barkola and Chaparmukh are virtually cut off from the Punjabi community hence they may not be listening to this music as they also communicate only in Axomiya language. But how does it happen in the Deccan where the presence of local Punjabis is also significant besides the tourists rush to Hyderabad and the religious tourism in Nanded and Bidar. The transporters of all kinds are not only predominantly Punjabis but others too play Punjabi songs on their vehicles for the sheer beats of this music. During fieldwork in Marakhali, Last Gate Colony (Dispur), Barra Bazar and Gora Line one could hear Punjabi songs played at high pitch. Interestingly it is observed in a non-Punjabi marriage party there where such songs are played at full pitch and the people were dancing.

Notwithstanding the absence of Punjabi speakers at both the places, the younger generation, other than the *safai karamcharis* with strong Punjabi

connection, is listening to the popular Punjabi songs. The tabled response is of course that of the heads of the household whose young ones are on a different track in this respect. Table No. 63 shows that 70.23 per cent respondents do listen to the Punjabi songs, of course with a regional variation such that 81.48 per cent respondents belong to the NE and 57.32 per cent are in the Deccan. A relation with income levels shows a positive correlation between the two variables. The tendency to listen to the Punjabi songs increases with rise in income levels. If 53.04 per cent respondents belong to the lowest income level, 83.78 per cent belong to the highest level of Rs. 14,000 and above per month.

After Punjabi songs is the turn of **Punjabi films**. How do Sikhs in the Deccan and the NE view Punjabi films? There are numerous television channels in Punjabi exclusively besides the videos available in the market. In the total sample, 55.79 per cent respondents only view such films. Once again this proportion is small in the Deccan where 42.04 per cent only see Punjabi films while the number is higher (67.78 per cent) in the NE. The higher percentage there may be attributed to the presence of *safai karamcharis* there who have live connection with Punjab and Punjabi culture. For other Sikhs in the NE and the Deccan, these films do not make much sense because Punjabi is not their lingua franca and the people of Barkola, Chaparmukh, Lanka and Nagaon in the NE do not understand Punjabi either. This variable is also positively related to the income level. As the income rises the tendency to watch Punjabi films also rises. If there are 38.66 per cent respondents in the lowest income level who see Punjabi films, there are 73.36 per cent in the highest income level.

Table 64: Watch Punjabi films

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	366	67.78	174	32.22	Chi ² =67.57**(df:1) C=0.25;
2. Dakhan	198	42.04	273	57.96	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	121	38.66	192	61.34	Chi ² =70.26**(df:2) C=0.25;
2. 5-14	253	57.63	186	42.37	
3. Above 14	190	73.36	69	26.64	
ALL DATA All Data	564	55.79	447	44.21	

Every respondent may not be interested in the films therefore watching or not watching these may not be a valid criterion of the respondents' Punjabi cultural orientation. Thus another question is posed to them with regard to viewing the **Punjabi programs** on television. There is a definite different response on this count when the two tables (Nos. 64 and 65) are compared. The latter table shows that 75.07 per cent respondents watch these shows while 24.93 per cent abstain from them and surprisingly there are no regional variations on this count at all. Why this is so is not explicable right now. It needs further exploration.

Table 65: Watch Punjabi programmes

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	403	74.63	137	25.37	Chi ² =0.12(df:1) C=0.01;
2. Dakhan	356	75.58	115	24.42	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	181	57.83	132	42.17	Chi ² =91.80**(df:2) C=0.29;
2. 5-14	339	77.22	100	22.78	
3. Above 14	239	92.28	20	7.72	
ALL DATA All Data	759	75.07	252	24.93	

352

The said issue of cultural orientation is further supplemented by inquiring into the respondents' interest in organising and attending Punjabi shows. The question of organising such shows does not arise with them and each one of them has this to say that it is beyond their capacity. The Punjabi singers demand too much money. It is not possible. In the words of a senior Dakhani Sikh: 'We find it difficult to feed our own family, how can we organise such shows. The Punjabi singers take many lakhs for a show.' But to the allied query of attending such functions also does not draw a very 'encouraging' response since 70.13 per cent respondents replied it in the negative. There is not much difference between the two regions either. If there are 72.96 per cent respondents in the NE, there are 66.68 per cent respondents in the Deccan as shown in Table No. 66 below. Sometimes such programmes are organised by the Punjabi Sikhs at Hyderabad and Guwahati etc. since they have enough resources and capacity for organising such programmes but neither their frequency is high nor the non-punjabi Sikhs have much access to them.

Table 66: Organize/attend Punjabi shows

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	146	27.04	394	72.96	Chi ² =4.45*(df:1) C=0.07;
2. Dakhan	156	33.12	315	66.88	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	86	27.48	227	72.52	Chi ² =1.68(df:2) C=0.04;
2. 5-14	132	30.07	307	69.93	
3. Above 14	84	32.43	175	67.57	
ALL DATA					
All Data	302	29.87	709	70.13	

The penultimate section of the questionnaire poses **questions on** and **about Punjab** such that we may come to know their social and spiritual links with this

state. No doubt all the Sikhs there consider Punjab the home of their ancestors, the place of their origin but they assert emphatically "*Jahan rehte hain ghar vahin hota hai. Ab hamara ghar to yehi hai.*" Literally put, the home is where you are putting up. Now this is our home. Yet most of them feel that they wish to visit Punjab and when they say this, they mean to visit Harmandar Sahib at Amritsar and other places of religious significance. But each one is not resourceful enough to arrange such a visit. Some people in the NE and the Deccan express their desire saying: '*Punjab jana to chahte hain par paisa nahin hai.*' That we wish to visit Punjab but for that we do not have money.

Table 67: Visited Punjab

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	253	46.85	287	53.15	Chi ² =9.33** (df:1) C=0.10;
2. Dakhan	266	56.48	205	43.52	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	123	39.30	190	60.70	Chi ² =80.72** (df:2) C=0.27;
2. 5-14	202	46.01	237	53.99	
3. Above 14	194	74.90	65	25.10	
ALL DATA					
All Data	519	51.34	492	48.66	

The *safai karamcharis* of the NE are the only respondents in the total sample of 1011 who visit Punjab regularly. In the sample, 51.34 per cent respondents have visited Punjab while 48.66 per cent respondents have never been there. In terms of regional variations there is a swing of about 10 per cent in favour of the Sikhs from Deccan. They make 56.48 per cent respondents compared to the 46.85 per cent in the NE. As all the respondents are also making this observation, a positive relation with levels of income is more than obvious. If there are 39.30 per cent respondents

that fall in the lowest income level the number of those who visited Punjab is double, that is, 74.90 per cent for the highest group.

It is further substantiated from their interviews that many of those who have visited Punjab are not on their own but with jathas, as part of pilgrimage especially to Harmandar Sahib at Amritsar and other places of Sikh religious significance like Anandpur Sahib or Damdama Sahib at Talwandi Sabo or Muktsar Sahib or Fatehgarh Sahib etc. As a matter of fact their main purpose of visit here is to pay respect there – *darshan karne ke liye*. The rich transporters of Hyderabad, Nanded and Bidar send their vehicles sometimes for this purpose. This trend has picked up only recently. Once on the occasion of the 300 years of the birth of the Khalsa (1999), a fully sponsored train was despatched from Nanded to visit gurdwaras in the north India. Many people travelled to this side on that occasion for the first time in their life. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar also sponsored a trip of about 186 Axomiya Sikhs in March 2008 to Punjab that made headlines in many newspapers then. Before and even after that, no such attempt has been made. Such jathas are more often sent from the Deccan but never from the NE. The Sikh transporters of the NE though do so for ferrying devotees from all over the region to Dhubri and to Chaparmukh on the birth and death anniversaries of Guru Tegh Bahadur but not outside the region.

As already mentioned above, when they wish to visit Punjab it is more a case of undertaking pilgrimage, visiting the supreme religious institution of the Sikhs at Amritsar. They do not wish to be here searching their roots that most of them do not know about. It becomes clear when we relate it to another table showing their family links in Punjab. Of the total respondents, 73.89 per cent have no family links in Punjab while 26.11 per cent do have family ties here. If the family links are not there

'where do we go?' they say: '*Vahan kiske paas jana hai.*' Thus two stumbling blocks with respect to making a visit to Punjab are the absence of kinship relations and the lack of resources.

The *safai karmacharis* are the most frequent visitors to Punjab since they have links here. Almost every respondent from amongst them expressed desire to settle in Punjab, also for the simple reason that they are not allowed to buy property at Shillong or in Megahalaya. The elder generation is in dilemma. What to do? Our children do not wish to return but we cannot do anything here. In almost all households, it is preferred that one or two children are married in Punjab so that in case of any eventuality of being thrown out from there, there is someone to fall back upon. It is because of these kinship relations, of giving daughters and taking daughters-in-law from Punjab that this connection is intact. There is small percentage of people, especially young in age, who have never been here. The better offs among them do take a family trip during vacations to their children in school, to Punjab to renew family ties but their number is not large.

The Axomiya Sikhs have absolutely no such ties in Punjab but a few of the well offs among them are not averse to take a daughter or son-in-law from here given the suitability of the marital alliance. The same is true of the Deccan as well. The concern here is equality in social status. Such instances are sporadic which is why we find that there are 26.11 per cent respondents only who have links in Punjab and majority of them are from the NE, that is, 34.07 per cent while 16.99 per cent are from the Deccan. And these links are not only through the marriages of their children but also of their elders as well. This percentage is high in the case of NE which is solely due to the presence of *safai karamcharis* there who keep their Punjab link potent and alive. As already mentioned they prefer to marry their

children in Punjab. This dimension has assumed greater significance as the politics of identity is picking up in the NE especially in Meghalaya where these are considered outsiders who cannot buy land or property there.

The absence of such a community, like the *safai karamcharis* of the NE, in Deccan thus brings down their proportion to half which is mere 16.99 per cent. 83.01 per cent respondents there have no links in Punjab. It is because of the local entrenchment of the Dakhani Sikhs in the culture of their karma bhoomi. Besides the sociological factors of consolidated social networking in the respective local region and similarity of cultural norms and values, the economic factor is important for those among them who do not find an equal match there and get into an alliance through the newspapers or such other media and agencies. But then preference is not Punjab but for a Sikh, wherever.

Table 68: Links with families in Punjab

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	184	34.07	356	65.93	Chi ² =38.08** (df:1) C=0.19;
2. Dakhan	80	16.99	391	83.01	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	57	18.21	256	81.79	Chi ² =38.20** (df:2) C=0.19;
2. 5-14	103	23.46	336	76.54	
3. Above 14	104	40.15	155	59.85	
ALL DATA					
All Data	264	26.11	747	73.89	

When we break up this information in terms of economic categories, it becomes clear that only 18.21 per cent respondents with income less than Rs 5,000 per month have links in Punjab. As the income level rises beyond Rs. 14,000 per

month, their number rises too to 40.15 per cent. Conversely these proportions for those who have no links here in Punjab are 81.79 per cent and 59.85 per cent respondents respectively.

Since majority of these Sikhs have never been to Punjab and have no links here in terms of social relations especially familial, and majority of them are staying there for about two centuries, they hardly have **memories of Punjab**. 87.24 per cent respondents replied negatively to this poser: 'Do you have memories of Punjab?' This figure is higher for those in Deccan (91.72 per cent) than those in the NE (83.33 per cent). This proportion too seems higher due to the presence of the *safai karamcharis* there who are quite a significant number in the sample of the NE and have active organic links in Punjab which is why their percentage is higher, 16.67 per cent respondents compared to the Deccan which stands at half of that, that is, 8.28 per cent. Despite these inter-regional variations the economic factor keeps its weight in a market society. In this case too, the table shows that the proportion of those having memories of Punjab increases with the rise in income levels. Of the total data, if 8.31 per cent respondents in the income group of Rs. 5,000 per month have memories, the number goes double (19.3 per cent) for those above Rs. 14,000 per month. For those who answered in the negative, their proportions are 91.69 per cent and 80.69 per cent respectively.

Table 69: Memories of Punjab

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E.	90	16.67	450	83.33	Chi ² =15.89**(df:1) C=0.12;
2. Dakhan	39	8.28	432	91.72	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	26	8.31	287	91.69	Chi ² =15.73**(df:2) C=0.12;
2. 5-14	53	12.07	386	87.93	
3. Above 14	50	19.31	209	80.69	
ALL DATA					
All Data	129	12.76	882	87.24	

Interestingly, even if those elders of the *safai karamcharis* who have retired and harbour a wish to return to Punjab are not returning. Why do you harbour this wish? A senior person replies: '*Apna ghar apna hundai. Aithon pata nahin kadon kadd dein. Naale ji, Punjab da tan paani vi gheu (ghee) vangun lagd'ai.*'

The Sikhs in the NE and the Deccan both do have **caste** and/or **community associations**. Sitting and working in a north Indian university and given to the kind of reading materials, one assumes that these people far from their place of birth shall be longing to consolidate their social solidarity through associations based on caste, community, occupation or locality etc. since that is the only way to survive in an alien land, especially in the Meghalaya state of the NE where such people are blatantly called 'outsiders', hence a question in this respect. It has been observed that 68.05 per cent respondents only are having an affiliation with such an association while 31.95 per cent do without that.

Table 70: Have caste or community association

Group/Sub Group	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Region					
1. N.E	517	95.74	23	4.26	Chi ² =408.75**(df:1) C=0.54;
2. Dakhan	171	36.31	300	63.69	
Income Group (Th)					
1. Up to 5	163	52.08	150	47.92	Chi ² =58.13**(df:2) C=0.23;
2. 5-14	317	72.21	122	27.79	
3. Above 14	208	80.31	51	19.69	
ALL DATA					
All Data	688	68.05	323	31.95	

But when we look at the inter-regional differences the table makes interesting revelations. There is stark difference between the NE and the Deccan. The former has 95.74 per cent respondents who have caste/community associations while those in the latter region have 36.31 per cent. This proportion seems higher in the NE because of the urban segment of *safai karamcharis* in the NE in Guwahati/Dispur and Shillong who are living in closed colonies there and are invariably a member of an association or committee that looks after their interests in a situation marked by active conflict with the locally dominant community like the Khasis in Shillong and the local government as well.

Besides catering to the social and welfare interests of the respective members these associations are also pitted against those local politically entrenched interests including that of the government that intend to throw them out of their place on one pretext or another. The skirmishes and clashes between the Sikhs and the Khasis and the attempts of the Shillong Municipal Corporation to clear areas of the Barra Bazar and Gora Line for beautification and alleged easing of

traffic congestion has made each person involve oneself in some occupational and/or residential associations. They have City Gurdwara Management Committee (Shillong), Harijan Panchayat Committee at Shillong and also at Dispur and so on. This is true not only in Shillong or Meghalaya but all over. The situation is no different in Guwahati/Dispur where these people have been asked to move out from there. Similar situation developed also in Hyderabad and also in Nanded in the name of widening the streets around the main gurdwara Sach Khand. Once again the economic variable shows its influence in joining these associations. Those in the lowest income group are 52.08 per cent respondents while those in the highest group are 80.31 per cent. It is understandable because it is the economic stake that impels them to protect their interests and fight against the disruptive forces. The poor have no stakes and not much to lose.

Despite these associations and their high membership in the NE these people do not involve themselves in the local politics in the usual sense of the term. In the total sample 59.64 per cent respondents do not involve in politics. And politics for them means to be a member of a political party and contesting elections on that platform for assuming the office of the MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) or the MP (Member of Parliament). Politics for them does not mean fighting for their own rights and for a just cause such as resisting ouster from own living place where they are residing for about one century. It is due to this conception of politics that we find only 44.81 per cent respondents in the NE do not involve themselves in politics while the corresponding figure for the Deccan is 76.65 per cent respondents. There is no such pressing issue for them to come together and protest.

Table 71: Involve in politics

Group/Sub Group	No		Village		City		State	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region								
1.N.E	242	44.81	187	34.63	106	19.63	5	0.93
2.Dakhan	361	76.65	4	0.85	104	22.08	2	0.42
Income Group (Th)								
1.Up to 5	246	78.59	19	6.07	46	14.70	2	0.64
2. 5-14	253	57.63	93	21.18	92	20.96	1	0.23
3.Above 14	104	40.15	79	30.50	72	27.80	4	1.54
All Data	603	59.64	191	18.89	210	20.77	7	0.69

For those who involve themselves in politics it is relevant to look into the level of their participation that may be village, city or the state. In the whole sample their participation is 18.89 per cent, 20.77 per cent and 0.69 per cent respondents respectively. This data attests to the above contention that for them what does politics mean? Interestingly regional variations do not matter much for the participants in politics except at the level of village. In the NE 34.63 per cent respondents involve in politics while in the Deccan it is mere 0.85 per cent.

Chapter V

362

CONCLUSION

The present study seems to be fulfilling its objective of not only identifying the sections of Sikh community dispersed in the south and the north-east Indian subcontinent but those amongst them that need immediate measures to be taken up by the government for their upliftment from the present drudgery they are experiencing. This is the intention of the project to high light the socio-economic characteristics of these sections of the Sikh minority community situated in two different geographic locations and in distinctly separate socio-economic and cultural conditions. This study prima facie rejects this popular perception about the Sikhs that they never slog under any circumstance and are ever thriving and prosperous people wherever.

For most people in Punjab Sikhs and poverty are incongruous. No doubt Sikhs are an enterprising and dynamic people who have the tenacity to thrive in any situation howsoever uncongenial and hostile that may be, since they harbour the spirit of *chardikala* given to them by their religion and philosophy, yet the study reveals that many of them are experiencing poverty of the extreme kind though there too they have not given up their zest for life. It is significant to note that there too they are fighting for better working and living conditions and ever attempting to make a qualitatively better living.

A detailed study of the socio-economic profile of 1011 respondents, 540 in the North-East and 471 in the Deccan, dispels many self-perpetuated myths by the Punjabi Sikhs about their community anywhere. This research informs that all is not well with all sections of this community and it is not homogeneous by any socio-

economic criterion. The Sikhs are often given to this assumption of being a homogeneous society by their religious and political leaders. The cases of Manna Singh of Mortad and Kishan Singh of Nizamabad described above are a pointer in the direction of heterogeneity amongst Sikhs and also utter poverty that some strata of this otherwise dynamic and affluent community are made to experience.

The two types of Sikhs that have been the focus of this study are the Dakhani Sikhs in the Deccan and the Axomiya Sikhs in Assam. Interestingly both of these people are a product of similar situations and almost same conditions yet we find sociologically different elements in these communities groomed under different socio-economic and historical conditions. Both of them are the progeny of Sikh soldiers of the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh sent to support the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1830 and the Ahom ruler Chandrakanta Singha in 1820, so believe the Dakhani and Axomiya Sikhs respectively. I am saying 'so believe' because the historians doubt the veracity of this belief of the respective communities following the rules of British paramountcy and the Treaty of Amritsar of 1809 between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the British rulers in India.

H.K. Barpujari mentions that 'In 1820, *it is said*, five hundred Sikh soldiers came from Punjab at the instance of Ranjit Singh for fighting against the Burmese in favour of king Chandrakanta Singha. The commander of the soldiers was a Sikh Chaitanya Singh.' (Barpujari 1994: 242) (emphasis added) A.C. Bannerjee is silent about Chandrakanta Singha soliciting help from Sikhs (Ranjit Singh) and others against the Burmese invasion while Himadri Bannerjee also doubts the possibility of troops from Punjab following the treaty of Amritsar in 1809. (Banerjee 2007: 61) Edward Gait in *the History of Assam* writes: 'In the following year (i.e. 1821)

Chandrakant collected another force of about 2000 men, chiefly Sikhs and Hindustanis, and again entered his own dominions.' (Gait 2008: 235)

B.C. Chakravorty writes: 'In 1891 at the time of Manipur rebellion, it was found that the rebel court of that state was instigating Khonoma to join the rebels, so a Sikh regiment was brought to Golaghat to overcome the Khonoma people, and the result was salutary.' (Chakravorty 1964: 124) S.K. Bhuyan, however, refers to the presence of Sikhs in Assam even in the latter half of the eighteenth century: 'The burkendaz rabble now rallied round the standard of Krishnanarayan. They consisted of Sikhs, Rajputs and all manner of men from Bengal to Lahore.' (Bhuyan 1949: 279) Barpujari does reflect on the internal turbulence in the Ahom kingdom that increases the possibility of seeking help from outside: 'From the middle of the 18th century the Ahom monarchy was on the decline. The throne was occupied by a number of weak but unscrupulous rulers whose only ambition was the preservation of own lives and power regardless of the interests of the state. The court became the hotbed of intrigues and conspiracies and this was followed by political assassinations and insurrections.' (Barpujari 1977: 2)

An authority on Punjab and Sikh history, Professor J.S. Grewal confirms these doubts following the rules of British paramountcy because it is a matter of foreign relations between the Indian states to invite and send military support. It is not possible for any king to send his army through the British territory, and without their permission. Why should they permit? But he does not doubt the possibility of raising Irregular Troops of the Sikhs (*Jamiat-i-Sikhan*) from assorted individuals in and around the Deccan and may be from Punjab as well. (Personal interview, 26 May 2013)

Any how the issue here is not to ascertain the veracity of oral history that whether the Sikhs in the NE and the Deccan are a progeny of soldiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army or not but to look into the socio-economic conditions of existence of these communities at the two places who believe this to be their history. Besides the dominant communities of the Axomiya and Dakhani Sikhs, the allied groups of Sikhs that need urgent attention of the National Commission for Minorities are the *safai karamcharis* of the NE settled in Shillong and Guwahati/Dispur for the last about hundred years and the Banjara or Lambada and Sikligar Sikhs in the Deccan who are tribal people of the nomadic type. The latter claim to be the older residents of the south compared to the Dakhani Sikhs since they travelled southwards with Guru Gobind Singh in the first decade of the eighteenth century. On the poverty index they surpass all types of Sikh communities in the sample. Another study commissioned by the National Commission for Minorities in 2009 also makes this conclusive observation: 'However, the present study done on the Vanjaaras (Banjaras as in the present study), Sikligars, Lobanas and the Dakhini Sikhs reveals that these Sikh communities are leading their lives in a *state of utmost deprivation and are extremely vulnerable*.' (Bijalwan 2009: 41) (emphasis added)

There is yet another kind of Sikh people at both the places in the NE and the Deccan who proclaim to be Punjabi Sikhs and are highly visible given their entrenchment in the local economy and politics. They are the entrepreneurs and business people who came here not for employment but for business. Many of them are there for more than six decades. To be specific those of the peasant stock came later about three decades ago. The khatri among them have held on to the retail and wholesale business whereas those with peasantry background are the transporters and dealers in auto-parts business. Both these type of Sikhs have not

been included in the present study since they are affluent and do not deserve any welfare doles from the government. Their flourishing businesses have got them entrenched in the local and regional politics since the economy and politics are wedded in a market society.

There are similarities and dissimilarities between the Sikhs in the two samples of this study. There are three types or categories of Sikhs in the North-East (NE) and the Deccan. One, the local Sikhs as progeny of the Sikh soldiers settled there for about two centuries such as Axomiya and the Dakhani. Two, there are the Scheduled Tribes (Sikligars, Banjaras or Lambadas) and Scheduled Castes especially the *safai karamcharis* in the NE who had been there for about one century. If the Scheduled Castes dominate the sample in the NE, the Scheduled Tribes are significantly visible in the Deccan.

The Dakhani Sikhs are primarily urban dwellers and do no agriculture. They prefer salaried jobs, wherever and of whatever kind, to business. They argue that service is in their blood not business or agriculture since their ancestors were a service class whose male descendants had an ensured service in the erstwhile state of Hyderabad. Now they are into all kinds of petty jobs like driving scooter or auto-rickshaw, taxi or other heavy transport, sewadars in a gurdwara, lower level office jobs in government and private sector etc. Running a petty vendor's shop from their residence is now picking up especially by their unemployed children and women (house wives) who look after this business operated from home itself. We find a clear shift from their parents' occupation who made a salaried class in the Nizam's state. The abolition of this state led to their fall where they were a sort of a privileged people enjoying status and authority.

Axomiya Sikhs on the other hand are largely rural dwellers doing agriculture primarily while their wards are looking for employment after suitable education but this number is quite small. They are also getting into petty trading and employment of whatever kind like Dakhani Sikhs. If annexation of the Nizam's state has affected Dakhani Sikhs coercing them to shift from traditional occupation, the fragmentation of land is coercing the Axomiya Sikhs to leave their traditional occupation. It is different matter that agriculture is also not complimentary to modern society and culture. It is considered a primary activity according to the classification of working force by the Census of India and is definitely lower in status to the manufacturing and service sector.

The Sikligar Sikhs are the only people in the whole of sample who are still continuing with their traditional occupation of what may be called, for the sake of convenience, the metal works. They are still semi-nomadic if not fully so, and as poor as they can be. 31.21 per cent respondents of the previous generation are engaged in the metal works (same occupation) while it stands at 31.63 per cent for the present heads of the households. However, the modern industrial products with refined appearance and cheaper as well, though not that durable are encroaching upon their occupational territory and coercing them to look for alternatives to earn their livelihood.

Another tribal community of Banjara people are picking up as religious workers doing *katha* and *kirtan* in gurdwaras and outside. Many of them are also recent converts to Sikhism. Thus we find a shift in their occupation from agriculture to religious workers and a shift in their religion as well since many Hindu Banjaras are studying in the Sikh seminaries and adopting this religion. Interestingly they are

comfortable with this religious and economic shift and are coaxing their kith and kin to follow suit.

The *safai karamcharis* are also losing their occupation though for different reasons. The availability of government jobs is continually receding all over the country but besides that the local government is under pressure from the local politics not to employ the 'outsiders'. Earlier the colonial government coaxed these people to emigrate from Punjab for the menial jobs the local tribals would not perform now the local people are asking them out-migrate since it is not their land. If earlier the *safai karamcharis* were keeping social relations in Punjab active for reasons of their untouchability now they are doing the same for fear of exodus from there anytime due to populist politics -- *pata nahin kadon kadd dein*.

What is common to the Sikligar and Dakhani Sikhs in the Deccan with the *safai karmacharis* in the NE is slum dwelling. The living conditions are dismally poor and not at all worthy of habitation. The number does not matter but there are houses that do not have the basic of the basic amenities like a toilet, a bathroom or a kitchen. It defies the sensibility of a civilised person how do these people manage without these minimum basic amenities. It is also true of Axomiya Sikhs as well to some extent in not having such amenities like toilet etc. but they are far more comfortable to the above mentioned sections of the Sikhs for the simple reason that they are not residing in congested localities of the big cities but in villages with open spaces and fields.

At the economic front all of these types of Sikhs in the sample do not fair well, rather they stand at the margin of the otherwise affluent Punjabi Sikhs over there who keep social distance from the Axomiya and Dakhani Sikhs and others too.

However, they are open to make marital alliances with those Axomiya and Dakhani Sikhs who have established themselves in a field and improved their economic status. But such people are so few in number that they may be counted on finger tips.

One thing that is very conspicuous in Axomiya and Dakhani Sikhs is their formal religious appearance at both places. They keep their complete Sikh look that means having a beard flowing or tied up and a turban or *keski*, a piece shorter than the turban. The turban may be five metres in length. The cutting of beard is also not common there. It is not that surprising to see Sikhs in the Deccan but definitely so in the remote areas of Nagaon in Assam. It is worth recalling that the Sikh taxi driver's cousin visiting him from Amritsar and accompanying us to Barkola exclaims: '*Bha, ah vekh aithe Sikhi poori kaim'ai. Eh kiddi door aa ke vassey ne. Ehojey Sikh tan aapne pinddan'ch vi ni labhdey.*' Brinchi Kumar Medhi too reports in his anthropological study of Barkola Sikhs in 1989 that two boys then had trimmed their beard that created much ruckus in the village. But this scenario has started shifting towards more filmy style looks following the effect of media and beauty industry especially with the younger generation. The senior generation is more orthodox still. I myself travelled with a young taxi driver clean shaven and unmarried Axomiya Sikh of Nagaon. He informs there are others like him too.

The question of Sikh identity in its true form is dear to all Sikhs except the *safai karmacharis*. They are so concerned about it that they do not allow their children to cut their hair (*kesh*). It is this form that has earned Dakhani Sikhs name and fame thus far, at least in the Deccan which is why they narrate the story of Nirmal so very fondly and proudly that their ancestors blew off the *shahi farman* of

the Nizam of Hyderabad giving them the *jagir* of Nirmal. They accepted the superiority of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to the Nizam.

The Axomiya Sikhs, likewise speak of Chaitanya Singh though not so frequently and conspicuously as their counterpart in the Deccan, who laid his life fighting against the Burmese protecting the sovereignty of Assam. He was not alone since many of his comrades too fell for Assam. *Manomati*, a historical novel by a famous litterateur Rajnikanta Bordoloi carries a vivid account of Chaitanya Singh's bravery. The Sikhs thus carry a good image with the local populace at both places that they are strong and brave, sincere and honest who are ever ready to lend a helping hand to others in need. There are a couple of historical novels who have portrayed a positive role of Chaitanya Singh while others not. (For details on this issue of Sikh image in the literature of Assam and the rest of east India see an excellent account by Himadri Banerjee 2007.)

The only exception with regard to the typical Sikh form is that of the *safai karmacharis* of the NE. Their senior generation, no doubt do keep *kesh* and turban characteristic of the Sikh form but very few amongst the younger ones fall in line with them. The element of religiosity is thus apparently less though they all believe in the Sikh gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib and visit gurdwaras as well. Their residential colonies –Barra Bazar and Gora Line at Shillong and the Last Gate Colony at Dispur and another one at Marakhali (Guwahati)– inevitably have a gurdwara and a Balmik temple. There is no discrimination by the residents in the celebration of gurpurabs as well as the Balmik *jayanti* at the temple. All of them go to each place with equal respect upholding the Gandhian principle of *sarva dharma sambhava*.

The question of visible identity and other identity markers prescribed by the Sikh religion and the respondents' perception about themselves on this count are often at variance. For instance, all of them claim to be 'Sikhs one hundred per cent', who believe in Guru Granth Sahib and also visit the gurdwara regularly though with different frequency no doubt. The respondents also inform about having taken *amrit* but that response does not match with their supporting all the *kakars*. 84 per cent respondents claim to have taken *amrit*, 63 per cent support *kakar* and 54 per cent only support all the five *kakar*. From the point of view of an orthodox Sikh this is a gross violation of *rehat maryada* amounting to blasphemy but from the perspective of the locals there and in remote areas farther from the centres of puritanical prescription of Sikh religious practices of the ideal type, it is not much of an issue. Having some of the five *kakar* seems good enough for them as an identity marker which is what is required by an average person in one's daily life. Hence this belief with them that they are *pakke* (full/complete/100 per cent) Sikhs, hence custodians of Sikh religion in far flung places. Their reference to the Sikhs in Punjab in this context is important. There is absolutely no untrue element in their self-glorification and being the self-declared custodians of Sikh religion just as they say - ...*hamne Sikhi ko sambhala hai*.

The issue of language and culture, the former especially is also manifestly obvious. Most Axomiya Sikhs in the village understand nothing more in Punjabi or Gurmukhi than Sat Sri Akal. The Dakhani Sikhs except Nanded and Bidar do not understand Punjabi well either. They converse in Hindi and with the local in Telgu but all of them anywhere never converse in Punjabi. Even with Sikhs from Punjab who find it hard to digest, how being Sikhs they are not speaking Punjabi, they talk in Hindi only. It is pertinent to remind the reader that only 0.42 per cent respondents

in the Deccan speak Punjabi at home while 5.94 per cent combine it with Hindi. In the NE if we exclude the *safai karamcharis* who speak Majhaili Punjabi so much so that even intonation is intact, not a single Axomiya respondent speaks Punjabi at home. I repeat, not a single Axomiya Sikh speaks Punjabi at home. Why should he?

The issue of language is related to the social environment, the kind of people that one interacts in day to day living. Thus language and culture have an intrinsic connection. It would not be possible to maintain Punjabi culture when the people around them speak some other language, say Axomiya in Assam and Hindi or Telgu or Marathi or Kannad in the erstwhile Deccan. Culture in this case is not to be confused with religion. The Sikhs at both the above mentioned places keep the Sikh form which is a religious prescription but they are fully immersed in the local culture by virtue of speaking the language of the people there and the region. The Dakhani and Axomiya Sikhs both have this feature in common since they have married local women and communicate in their language. It made the language of their children, hence their mother tongue. Whatever traces of Punjabi culture are reflected in them is a consequence of their subscribing to Sikh religion which of course has its origin and roots in Punjab.

Jasbir Singh, a young *bhai ji* of Barkola informs: 'I addressed a large religious congregation of local people in Axomiya about the Sikh religion and Sri Guru Granth Sahib and they were very happy with it. It is meaningful to talk to them in their language.' This was in response to my suggestion that they should not feel belittled as the Punjabi Sikhs make them feel, saying –*Eh keho jehey Sikh ne Punjabi nahin boldey*. This attitude of the economically dominant Punjabi Sikhs is not only peculiar to Assam but also in the Deccan. It is for this reason that the local Sikhs are called 'duplicate' or '*kachae*' Sikhs by them that may mean half baked, unripe and hence

not mature. But these Sikhs –Axomiya and Dakhani– both feel other way round and mince no words in claiming: '*Hamney Sikhi ko sambhala hai, Punjab mein to bura haal hai.*' Literally put, we have conserved the Sikh religion (its form or *Sikhi*) that is in ruins in Punjab.

It is interesting to note that the Sikhs in the Deccan have a definite answer to the question of Guru Gobind Singh moving towards the south though the historians may debate over the exact purpose of the Guru's journey. They say: '*Guru sahib jaani-jaan thhe. Voh Dakhan mein isi liye aaye thhe ki Sikhi to vahin bache gi, Punjab mein nahin.*' Literally put, the Guru knew too well that Sikh religion will be saved in the Deccan only not in Punjab which is why he traveled southwards.

But why do Punjabi Sikhs look down upon the local Sikhs in the NE and the Deccan? Probably, language and religion are bound together for them. But why? May be because in the case of Sikh religion, Gurmukhi is the language of the Guru Granth Sahib, the living guru of the Sikhs and none in body and soul after Him. And there is a clear distinction between a *gur-mukh* and a *man-mukh*. Thus it is believed that one who does not understand Punjabi, Gurmukhi in this case as opposed to Shahmukhi of West Punjab in Pakistan, is considered a non-*gurmukh*, hence a non-*gursikh* and a *man-mukh* over that. Thus such a person is considered a 'duplicate' Sikh or a '*kacha*' Sikh. This may be the underlying assumptions with them though I am not sure about it. But the Punjabi Sikhs still must not invoke this logic to characterise the Dakhani and Axomiya Sikhs in such like terms. It smells foul and degrades those Sikhs who have kept the Sikh religion alive and thriving at alien places. These Sikhs are not to be held in low esteem but given due regard. It is much in consonance with the teachings and philosophy enshrined in the Guru

Granth Sahib that lays emphasis on unity in variety, in pluralism and the modern day multiculturalism.

The question of culture flows from there. Language and culture are intrinsically connected and reinforce each other. It is no denying the fact that but for the *safai karamcharis* in the NE all other types of Sikhs are imbued in the local culture which is reflected primarily in the use of language especially at home followed by dress or costumes, food, rituals regarding life crisis rites, songs etc. to mention the important ones. It is often said that Axomiya Sikhs celebrate *Bihu* more than *Baisakhi*. No doubt the latter is more important for Sikhs but the former is most important in Assam. How could a festival of such an import be ignored by those people who are not only a minority there but whose men are wedded to the local women. Himadri Banerjee also writes: 'Their dual self also underlines that they "enjoy doing Bihu (Assamese spring festival) not bhangra (a distinct form of Punjabi-Sikh folk dance)".' (Banerjee 2006: 107)

The present study shows that the local influence is more strong on the Axomiya Sikhs of the NE than others. Banerjee once again has similar observations: 'The syncretic face of Sikhism has steadily brought the Assamese-Sikhs closer to the Assamese culture.' (Ibid.) In the Deccan 94.48 per cent respondents perform the Sikh rituals while in the NE their number is 63.52 per cent only and that includes the *safai karamcharis* as well. If this information is sought for the Axomiya Sikhs alone, we find 46.85 per cent respondents perform Sikh rituals in different religious ceremonies while 52.60 per cent mix the two, that is, Sikh and the local. Out of the total 19.98 per cent respondents performing mixed rituals, those in the NE count for 35.56 per cent while those in the Deccan are mere 2.12 per cent. We may say the preponderance of Sikh rituals in the Deccan owe more to the over arching presence

of the religious institutions like Hazoor Sahib, Nanded and Nanak Jhira Sahib at Bidar.

Despite the physical distance from Punjab, it is interesting to note that the Sikhs in the NE and Deccan do watch Punjabi channels giving songs and live telecast from Harmandar Sahib, Amritsar thus keeping some cultural and religious contact with the land of their ancestors. 70.23 per cent respondents listen to Punjabi songs and 75.07 per cent watch Punjabi programmes on the television. When it comes to visiting Punjab less than half of the respondents (48.66 per cent) have replied negatively. They have never been to this place. 51.34 per cent respondents who have visited Punjab also include the *safai karamacharis* who have live contacts here and keep coming regularly, may be once in two or three years or even more but they do come. It also includes those who have come here with jathas for religious tourism either sponsored by some rich transporters or the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) etc. though only once. Despite the *safai karamacharis*, there are 53.15 per cent Sikhs in the NE that have not visited Punjab ever. This figure is ten per cent less for the Dakhani Sikhs.

When it comes to having family links in Punjab there are only one fourth of the total respondents –26.11 per cent to be precise– who have family ties here and this population of the sample also includes the *safai karamacharis* who invariably marry one or two children, son or daughter, in Punjab. The three fourths of the sample who have no family ties here reply: 'Where do we go?' (*Vahan kiske paas jana hai.*) It is interesting to note that the *safai karamcharis* always have live contacts with Punjab, earlier for reasons of pull factor and later or currently for push factor. The first generation employees of the colonial government pulled their near and dear ones to Shillong for government employment, a big attraction then. The

marriage of their children was a large conduit for migration there. But the trend got reversed during the 1970s when the tribal versus non-tribal and insider versus outsider have taken roots in the NE. It has initiated the push factor to marry children in Punjab.

Now they do contemplate, should they settle here, where they can't. Should they return to Punjab, which is also not an easy proposition since they had been out from there for many generations. Most of them do not have land or house in the village to bank upon. And they do not have money enough to start a business though small. Here (NE) they have something at least, may be a house in the slum area or a corner shop etc. to fall back upon. We must note that these are the Scheduled Castes whose parents did menial jobs in Punjab too and did not have landed property. The house that their parents had must have been divided amongst brothers over these generations thus leaving virtually nothing for the present generation.

But what has been done by some households is that whatever surplus they had from their service in the NE has been invested to buy a small plot or build a house in their village or preferably in a nearby town. This tendency of investing in Punjab has picked up especially over the last few decades since when Meghalaya and other NE regions have witnessed heightened consciousness of the tribal versus non-tribal and insider versus outsider. The ban on purchasing property there may be seen as a boon in this respect of solidifying their ties with their ancestral homeland, Punjab and at least creating a foot hold for them in case of an exodus from the NE. The son of an erstwhile pardhan (president) of the Guwahati Municipal Workers Union at Marakhali informs: 'My father is eighty year old who wants to settle in Punjab. I tell him not to go there following my own experience. I have a small

business in Guwahati. I invested surplus to buy a shop and a plot at Tarn Taran. I rented the shop which is not being vacated. I reported to the police who are not willing to take action. The local people have their network. The police "listens" to them (*ohna di sunadi hai*) since we are the outsider there (*asin tan baharwale 'an*). We neither belong here nor there. We are outsider for the locals here as well as for the locals there too. This is our fate.' He continues: 'But my father wishes to settle there (*Oh Punjab jana chaundai*). I do not stop him but have warned him. Let him try.'

It is not unusual. The migrants always wish to return to their native land. It is not the case of *safai karamcharis* settled in the NE, an engineer friend from California, employed in the federal state service, married to an American lady and settled there for over three decades once remarked on his maiden visit since he left India: '*Bai ji, hun tan aithon di mushak vi changi lagdi 'ai*.' Literally, brother, now the foul smell too of this (native) place smells good.

This emotional bonding is fine with imagination but when it comes to real life, things are different. Their children do not want to go to Punjab given the facilities and life at Shillong but they cannot permanently settle there since buying property is not permitted. Under such circumstances they keep sticking to the place especially the elders who wish to 'return' but can't. The jobs for them are also becoming difficult because the local people are willing to take up this work and populist politics comes to their help. 'No jobs for outsiders.' The administration too follows this policy covertly. Himadri Bhaerjee too notes this dilemma during fieldwork in Guwahati in 2009:

There are others who feel like going back to the Punjab after retirement from a sweeper's job. An important factor in this decision-making process is the legal compulsion to vacate official quarters. With no security of employment of their sons in the GMC, no permanent place of residence and no property here in Guwahati, they "do not mind going back to the Punjab". But there too, they "have no permanent asset". They represent the unfortunate lot who "have nowhere to go". (Banerjee 2010: 22)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The whole idea of a research work (project) is to provide scientific insights into the area of research. Thus what follows from there is that on the bases of the findings of the report, it must carry at the end suggestions and guidelines to the government, a semi-official organisation, a non-governmental organisation or some other institution that wishes to take steps to implement the findings of a report such that it undertakes work to ameliorates the living conditions and life chances of the subjects of the study, the respondents and their households and its members etc. Besides interviewing the concerned authorities, the questionnaire itself carries a question to this effect: 'What should be done to improve your conditions?' Thus are given below suggestions or guidelines that may help the National Commission for Minorities and the government including other agencies for implementation:

- This is a study based on a sample of the larger universe. What should follow this is a listing of such households following the **census method** that need urgent attention on all indicators of socio-economic status (SES). Until and unless such listing is thorough, the welfare doles shall never reach the needy respondents. Census
- In the present market society with high competition in each walk of life, **education is absolutely necessary**. This is the only route to employment and hence self-dependence. It is a crucial resource to develop human resources. The availability of schools in the vicinity of localities of the poor communities in the Deccan and the NE be opened on priority basis. There is awareness amongst people since the respondents have been suggesting us to provide them quality education and in English medium. HRO

What is the percentage of children out of school school dropouts.

- Once basic and elementary education is given, these students be given some **vocational education and training** for self-employment. For instance, members of the Sikligar community have a particular kind of expertise in metal works gathered over generations. If their products whether making of swords or pans and knives etc. are given a stiff competition by the modern industrial products with good finesse and cheap rates as well, they should be encouraged to set up their **own units on cooperative basis**.

- Marketing** of their products is absolutely essential and they do face difficulty at that level. Marketing of their products may be facilitated and channelized effectively.

- Given the high incidence of poverty, these people be given **interest free loans** at least if not one time small grants for setting up own units preferably cooperative.

- Such encouragement for self-employment and self-dependence should be **community specific** since each one has own traditional occupation and expertise. For instance, if Sikligars are encouraged for establishing industrial units, Banjaras may be motivated to start trade and some sort of business once again preferably on cooperative basis. They are the traditional traders, the *vanaj kars*.

- We have seen that on their own these people have taken to Sikh seminaries and are becoming *raagis* and *kirtanias* on their own. They are not only converting to a different religion but also practising it for earning a living. They should be encouraged in this pursuit. The Sikh institutions are already doing so.

- The wards of the *safai karmacharis* of Guwahati/Dispur and Shillong may be encouraged to take up some aspect of **tourist industry** that may be plying **own taxi** or even as **tourist guides**. Both the places of their residence are bustling with tourist activity and there is great potential for this type of development. If Guwahati and Dispur are large enough in terms of population and economy, Shillong is the Switzerland of the east India, a big attraction to tourists from all around the region and the sub-continent. Growth. of
Assam/
Meghalaya
- Similarly, the Dakhani Sikhs who are already plying autos and taxis be **made self sufficient** in this respect not getting petty employment as driver but also an owner of one's own vehicle. Hyderabad has lot of potential on this front due to its growing economy, information technology industry besides tourism. It is a major metropolis in the south India as Guwahati is in the north-east. Growth
AP, Telangana
Assam
- The Axomiya Sikhs in the NE be given facilities to **improve their agricultural production** by laying irrigation channels or installing tube-wells etc. so that multiple and intensive cropping is made possible. Assam
- They should be encouraged to take to **dairying** since they have their fields too and there is no dearth of grass and fodder for at least six months in a year. Assam
- The Punjabi ancestry of these Sikhs can help them learn from the Punjab model of agricultural development which though is not good for Punjab (say paddy cropping) but well suits that (NE) agro-climatic region. No action
- They may also be motivated to take up **forestry on cooperative basis** given the geo-climatic factors congenial for this sort of economy. Assam

- **Pisciculture** be developed on modern commercial lines in the villages of Barkola and Chaparmukh. These villages already have ponds where fish are grown and sold out to contractors. The base is already there only need is to increase the scale and making it commercial at a larger scale. The whole of NE and its surrounding region take to fish in a big way. Their meal is not complete without fish what they call *maachh-bhat*.
- The marketing of their products of agricultural goods and allied activities must be ensured by some government or semi-government agency so that farmers may not get exploited at the hands of private businessmen.
- The **women folk** need special attention and they must be encouraged to take to such activities that tend to enhance the income of the household if not as independent earners. Sikligar women are already helping their men - husbands and sons- in production.
- Women be given some sort of **vocational training in tailoring, knitting, weaving** for instance, to mention a few so that they may be able to take up such activities at a commercial scale, may be small to begin with. In the age of unemployment, their grown up daughters may also be engaged in such productive activities. In Barkola there already exists such a cooperative venture to make *gamchhas*.
- There are already a few of them who are looking after the petty business in a corner of their house vending items of daily use for the families in the neighbourhood. They should be given loans to enlarge their activity so that **small scale business or vending becomes self-sustainable**.

- One of the most important things that should be taken up at utmost priority is to **improve the living conditions** of these people since they are living in subhuman and substandard conditions. Their houses and colony too not only lack the basic amenities like drinking water but even the clean air. The case of the *safai karamcharis* in the NE and of Sikligars in the Deccan especially in this respect is horrifying. Some respondents reported taking water for drinking from the channels of irrigation in the fields. Many have to fetch water from quite a distance. General
- The houses and colonies of a large number of these people, at least be equipped with the minimum requirement of **toilets and bathrooms** if not in each house at least on community basis. Many of these people in the slum colony do not have a kitchen. The case of Sikligars and *safai karamcharis* once again is simply pathetic. If the former carry out the essential activities in the open the latter do it in the shabby narrow streets of their colonies including laundry and cooking General
- The example of Guru Gobind Singh colony type **housing** in Ranga Reddy District be followed by all the states to make available a clean house and environment with basic civic facilities if nothing else. The Sikligars being nomadic may leave a place for another one but the *safai karamcharis* have no such space to move out or expand except to encroach upon the streets that have already reached limits. It is difficult for two normal sized persons to cross each other. The encroachers have 'eaten up' the common pathways or streets. They cannot buy land and property in Meghalaya, thus have households and households within houses with the marrying of sons. General

Are the
not
covered
under

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Scheme

- The **settlement of the nomadic and semi-nomadic communities** is another challenge for the government since the forces of modern market society can only be exploited by the settled ones since their children can go to school only then. All other things follow it. The welfare doles of the government can be given to them only if they are settled. Adhar card or ration card need permanent address and proof of identity. Who takes the risk of signing surety of their identity since these tribes -Sikligar and Banjara- already carry the stigma of being criminal under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871.
- All the communities living in utter poverty be issued BPL cards and ration be made available to them at highly subsided rates if not for free.

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FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF DAKHANI SIKHS AND MINORITY
SIKH COMMUNITIES SETTLED IN SOUTH AND NORTH-EAST INDIA**

**Project of the National Commission for Minorities
Government of India, New Delhi**

Dr. Birinder Pal Singh, Professor, Department of Sociology & Social Anthropology
Punjabi University, Patiala-147002 (Punjab)

Sr. No. _____ Village/City _____ Distt./State _____

1. Name of respondent _____ 2. M/F _____ 3. Age _____ yrs

4. Name of the head of the household _____

5. Name of caste _____ 6. Community _____ 7. Religion _____

8. Language/s spoken _____ written _____
at home _____ outside _____

9. Family income (**monthly**) in Rs. _____

10. Family members:

	Name	M/F	Age	Relation (resp.)	Edu*	Occupation**		Income (Rs. PM)
						Present	Last 5 yrs	
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								

*For children put (C) Education continuing; (F) Education finished.

****Details of labour/work (L/W):**

- I. Nature and types of present L/W and of other years.**
- II. Relations with the employer and fellow workers/dealers in trade of other communities etc.**
- III. What is the seasonal cycle of work in a year?**
- IV. No. of days (in a year) when gainfully employed_____.**
- V. What do you do when not employed?**
- VI. What is the day's routine then?**

Details of occupation (present/past) of parents living separately:

Respondent's father

Respondent's mother

11. Dwelling: kulli house: own rented
pucca (bricks only/cement plastered - fully/partially)
kacha mixed
12. Roof: permanent/temporary - tarpaulin/polythene/thatch/corrugated sheets
13. Floor: pucca (bricks only/cemented) kacha mixed
14. Rooms: 1/2/3/more () kitchen toilet bathroom
15. Water source: tap/hand pump (own) common other
16. Light source: earthen lamp/electric bulb (own connection with meter/*kundi*)
17. Cooking source: LPG kerosene fire wood dung cakes
18. HH items: stove pressure cooker fan/cooler inverter
cots/beds TV radio/Cassette/CDP Tel: LL/mobile
Vehicle: bicycle/motor cycle/scooter/car/other _____
rehri/rehra/rickshaw/other _____
Cattle: goat/sheep/buffalo/cow/bullocks/pony/other _____
Pets: cat/dog/hen/other _____

19. Other items/instruments/means of earning livelihood (specify)/none
20. Other family assets: land/shop etc. (specify area/number)/none
21. Are you satisfied with your present way of life? Yes () No ()
22. If yes, how? If no, why?
23. What should be done to improve it?
24. Since when are you staying at this place? _____ (brief history)
25. Your immediate neighbours: own community or other (specify) _____
26. Where is/was your **father** staying? _____
27. Your **mother's**: community _____ religion _____
 language _____ paternal resi. _____
28. Your **wife's**: community _____ religion _____
 language _____ paternal resi. _____
29. Information about your married children even if not staying with you:
- (i) **Son-in-law's**: community _____ religion _____
 language _____ occupation _____ residence _____
- (ii) **Daughter-in-law's**: community _____ religion _____
 language _____ paternal residence _____
30. Women's dress: local () Punjabi () both () mixed ()
31. Food and cooking: local () Punjabi () both () mixed ()
32. Ritual performance at birth, marriage and death:
 local () Sikh () mixed ()
33. Interaction with **own** community:
- i. How often your community gathers?
- (a) In a **month** at the level of
 mohalla () village () city () region ()

(b) In **six months** at the level of

mohalla () village () city () region ()

ii. On what occasion/s? _____

34. Interaction with **other** community:

i. Do you visit houses of other community members? Yes () No ()

If yes, often/sometimes/only when invited

If no, why?

ii. Do you invite them to your family/community functions?

If yes, specify

If no, why?

iii. Do you visit religious places of other communities? Yes () No ()

If yes, usually/on occasions only

35. Sikh Religious orientation:

i. Do you believe in the Sikh gurus and the Granth Sahib? Yes () No ()

ii. Do you visit a gurdwara? Yes () No ()

If yes, everyday/once a week/once a month/sometimes/never

iii. Do you celebrate *gur-purabs*? Yes () No ()

iv. Do you support five Ks (*kakar*)?: Yes () No ()

If no, you have *kesh* () *kangha* () *kachha* () *kada* () *kirpan* ()

v. Do you recite *Bani* (*path*) every day? Yes () No ()

vi. Have you taken *amrit*? Yes () No ()

vii. Do you have difficulty in practising/believing Sikhism? Yes () No ()

If yes, specify?

viii. Do you undertake pilgrimage? Yes () No ()

If yes, to which place/s? _____

ix. Do you listen to *gurbani*, *kirtan*, *katha* at home? Yes () No ()

If yes, on TV channels () cassette recorder/CD player ()

36. Punjabi cultural orientation:

i. Do you listen to Punjabi songs? Yes () No ()

ii. Do you see Punjabi films? Yes () No ()

iii. Do you watch Punjabi programmes on TV channels? Yes () No ()

If yes, name the channels _____

iv. Do you organise/attend Punjabi cultural shows etc.? Yes () No ()

37. Do you visit Punjab? Yes () No ()

If yes, how often? _____

If no, why?

38. Do you have links with extended family/community in Punjab? Yes () No ()

If yes, type of link.

If no, why?

39. What memories of Punjab do you have?

Do you long to be there? Yes () No () **Explain briefly**

40. Do you have caste/community association/sabha/panchayat? Yes () No ()

If yes, what are its functions?

Are you involved in it? Yes () No ()

If yes, do you involve in the politics of village () city () state ()

41. Any other information not given above:

2

PROGRAMME

at Gurudwara Saheb Baram Bala
Maharaja Ranjeet Singh Nagar, Sikh Chawniat, Hyderabad.

- 10-5-2012 08-00 a.m. Arambh Sri Akhand Path Saheb
12-5-2012 08-00 a.m. Samapti Sri Akhand Path Saheb
10-00 a.m. **SAGAI** of Bride Grooms (Dulha)
11-30 a.m. **SAGAI** of Bride (Dulhan)

Guru ka Langar will be served.

- 13-5-2012 08-00 a.m. **Barat** from Guru Nanak High School
to Gurudwara Saheb Baram Bala

11-30 a.m. **ANAND KARAJ** (Marriage)

Guru ka Langar will be served from 12-30 pm.

Note : Bidai programme will be arranged individually.

Organisers

Prabandhak Committee

Gurudwara Saheb Baram Bala

Maharaja Ranjeet Singh Nagar,
Sikh Chawniat, Attapur, R.R. Dist., Hyderabad.

Cell : 9393026605, 9391115176, 9396801701, 8801361529
8977409865, 9866591040



ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

ਧਨੁ ਸੋਚਗਨਿ ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਪਛਾਨੈ ॥ ਮਨੈ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਤਸੈ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੈ ॥

With the blessing of Sri Guru Granth Saheb Ji Maharaj

Samuhik Vivah Samagam

on 12th -13th May 2012

at Gurudwara Saheb Baram Bala
Maharaja Ranjeet Singh Nagar,
Sikh Chawniat, Attapur, Hyderabad.



Singh Sahib Sant Baba Kulwant Singh Ji
Jalandhar, Sri Hazur Sahib



Guru Roop Sadh Sangath Ji,

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa
Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

Sant Baba Balwinder Singh Ji
Langar Sahib, Sri Hazur Sahib

The Prabandhak Committee Gurudwara Saheb Baram Bala
Sikh Chawniat, Hyderabad is organising mass marriage
(Samuhik Vivah Samagam) on 12th & 13th May 2012.

You are cordially invited with family and friends to attend the
Samuhik Vivah Samagam and bless the couples.

Guru ka Langar will be served.

Organisers

Prabandhak Committee

Gurudwara Saheb Baram Bala

Maharaja Ranjeet Singh Nagar, Sikh Chawniat, Attapur, R.R. Dist., Hyderabad.
with active co-operation of All Gurudwara Saheb of A.R.

392

SAHEB BARAMBALA, SIKH CHAWNIAT, MAHARAJA RANJEET SINGH NAGAR HYDERABAD SAMUHIK VIVAAB SAMAGA 2010 @ GURUDWARA

May 8, 2010 8:00 am – May 9, 2010 11:00 pm

SAMUHIK VIVAAB SAMAGAM 2010 AT BARAMBALA SIKH CHAWNIAT HYDERABAD

Event Details

THE PRABHANDHAK COMITTEE OF GURUDWARA SAHEB BARAMBALA WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF OTHER PRABHANDHAK COMITTEE'S OF HYDERABAD & SECUNDERABAD IS ORGANISING A ' SAMUHIK VIVAAB SAMAGAM' AT GURUDWARA SAHEB BARAMBALA, SIKH CHAWNIAT, MAHARAJA RANJEET SINGH NAGAR, HYDERABAD, ANDHRA PRADESH.

PROGRAMME:

ARAMBH SRI AKHAND PATHE SAHEB ON 6TH MAY, 2010 THURSDAY AT 08:30 AM
SAMAPATHI OF SRI AKHAND PATHE SAHEB ON 8TH MAY, 2010, SATURDAY AT 08:00 AM
BREAK FAST AT 09:00 AM

ON 8TH MAY , 2010 SATURDAY SAGAN OF BRIDEGROOMS AT 10:00 AM AND GURU KA LANGER 12:00 NOON
SAGAN OF BRIDES AT 05:00 PM AND 07:00 PM GURU KA LANGER

ON 9TH MAY , 2010 SUNDAY START OF BARATH AT 08:00 AM FROM GURU NANAK HIGH SCHOOL SIKH CHAWNIAT, AND REACHES GURUDWARA SAHEB BARAMBALA AT 09:00 AM.

ANAND KARAJ (SAMUHIK ROOP SEY) AT 11:00 AM
GURU KA LANGER WILL BE SERVED AT 12:30 PM

THERE ARE 21 COUPLES WILL BE GET MARRY IN THIS SAMUHIK VIVAAB SAMAGAM

01. S SANTH SINGH S/O S TULJA SINGH BIBI SARWANTH KAUR D/O S BACHATAR SINGH
02. S MANMEET SINGH S/O S JOGINDER SINGH BIBI AMARJEET KAUR D/O S KEWAL SINGH
03. S JASPAL SINGH S/O S RANJEET SINGH BIBI KAMALJEET KAUR D/O S PREETAM SINGH
04. S KARNAL SINGH S/O S BABU SINGH GRANTHI BIBI RANJEET KAUR D/O S BALBINDER SINGH
05. S AMLUK SINGH S/O S ARJUN SINGH BIBI GUNWANTH KAUR D/O S HARI SINGH
06. S GURVINDER SINGH S/O S JITENDER SINGH BIBI SATNAM KAUR D/O S GURCHARAN SINGH
07. S PARMINDER SINGH S/O S JAGDEESH SINGH BIBI CHARNJEET KAUR D/O S JOGINDER SINGH
08. S RANVINDER SINGH S/O S RAJENDER SINGH BIBI SHEETAL KAUR D/O S PREETPAL SINGH
09. S HARPAL SINGH BEDI S/O S SANTH SINGH BEDI BIBI JASBINDER KAUR D/O S PREM SINGH
10. S RAJPAL SINGH S/O S GOPAL SINGH BIBI JASWINDER KAUR D/O S HARBHAJAN SINGH
11. S PREETPAL SINGH S/O S BALWANTH SINGH BIBI RANBEER KAUR D/O S JOGA SIINGH
12. S HARMINDER SINGH S/O S BHAGAT SINGH FAUJI BIBI JAGJEET KAUR D/O S KARTAR SINGH MASTER
13. S HARMINDER SINGH S/O S DAYAL SINGH BIBI JAGJEET KAUR D/O S. LAL SINGH
14. S KIRPAL SINGH S/O S PREETAM SINGH BIBI HARMINDER KAUR D/O S NIRANJAN SINGH
15. S HARBINDER SINGH S/O S PRITAM SINGH BIBI MANMEET KAUR D/O S GURMUKH SINGH

394

16. S MANJEET SINGH S/O S MAHENDER SINGH BIBI IQBAL KAUR D/O S JAIPAL SINGH
17. S SURJIT SINGH S/O S FATEH SINGH BIBI TARNJEET KAUR D/O S DALBEER SINGH
18. S RASPAL SINGH S/O S RAJA SINGH BIBI AVINASH KAUR D/O S SURAT SINGH
19. S RAVINDER SINGH S/O S HARI SINGH BIBI MANJEET KAUR D/O RAMULU

ANOTHER TWO PAIRS WERE ENGAGED LAST WEEK AND ARE GETTING MARRY IN THIS SAMUHIK MAHOTSAV DETAILS WERE NOT RECIEVED .

IN THIS SAMUHIK VIVAHAH MAHOTSAV 2010 THE GOVT OF ANDHRA PRADESH MINORITY CELL HAS SANCTIONED Rs. 15000/= TO EACH COUPLE.

THE SADH SANGAT OF HYDERABAD & SECUNDERABAD WILL BE PRESENTING HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS AND ARTICLES TO THE COUPLES TO START THEIR NEW LIFE.

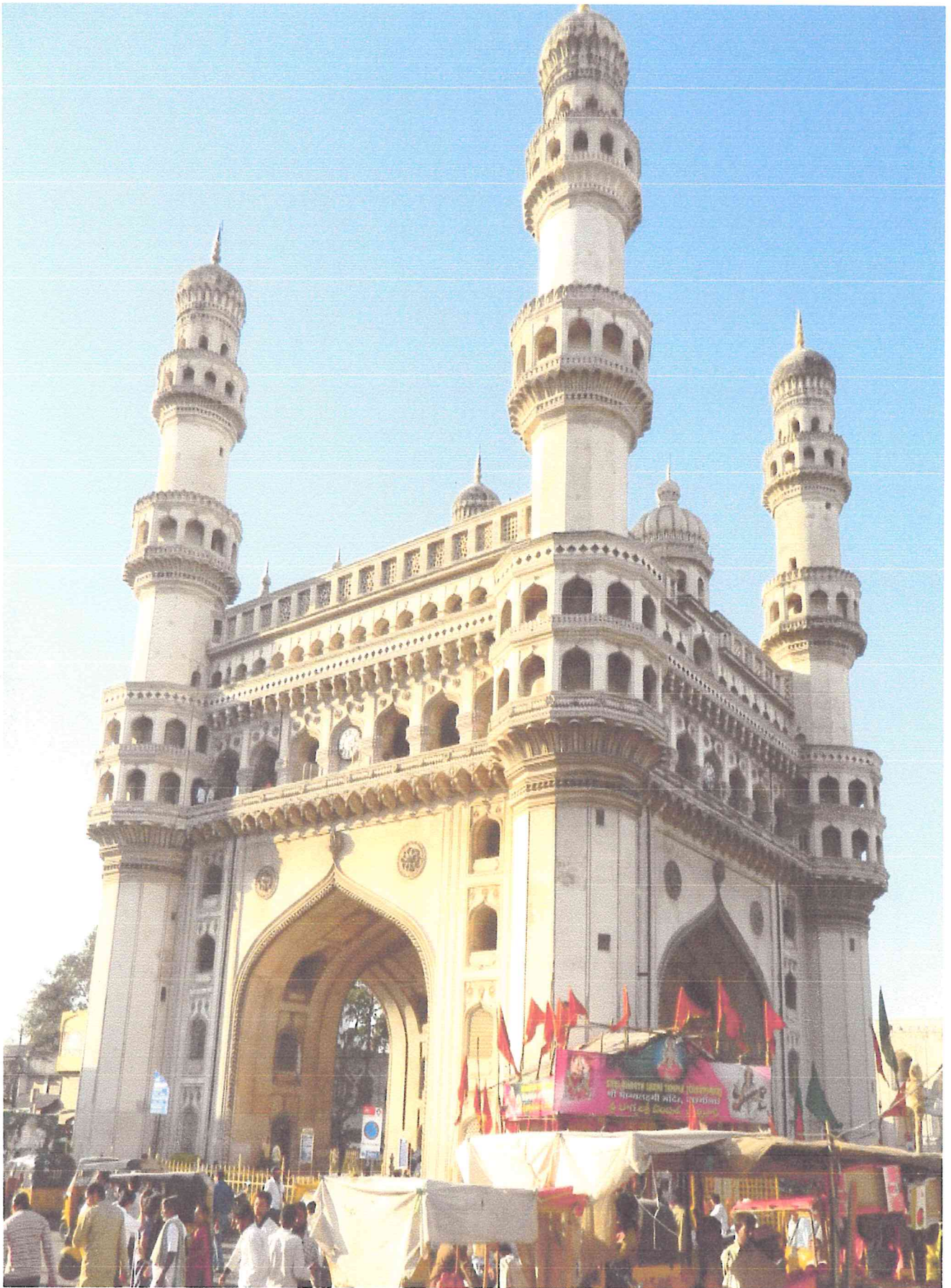
FOR FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT : 0 9393 026 605, 0 9391 115 176, 0 9396 801 701, 0 9393 007 392, 0 9948 893 019, 0 9866 591 040

Contact Name: SAJJAN SINGH

Contact Email: sikhheritagefoundation2003@yahoo.co.in

Event Website: <http://www.sikhnet.com/>

(Note: No editing has been done)

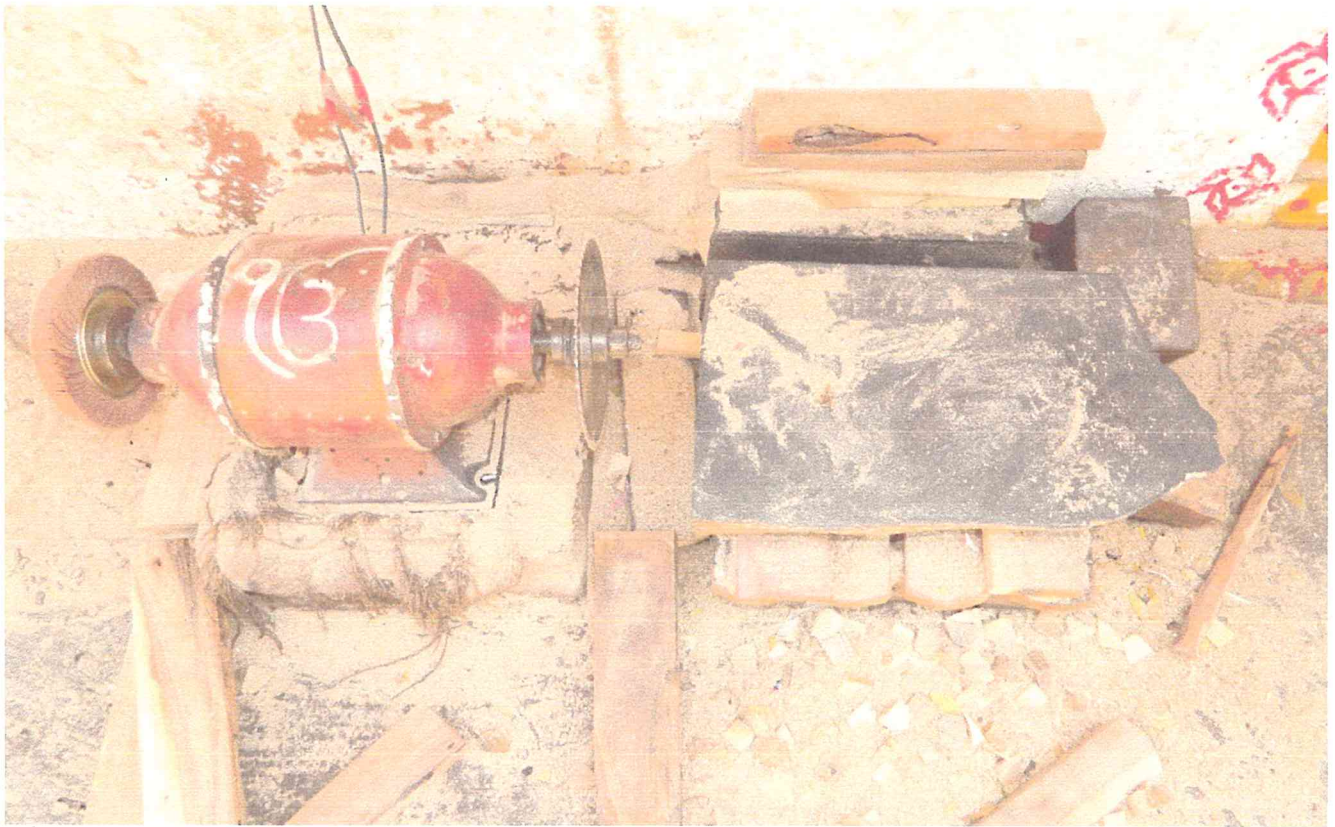


CHAR MINAR (HYDERABAD)



SIKLI GARS AT WORK (HYDERABAD)





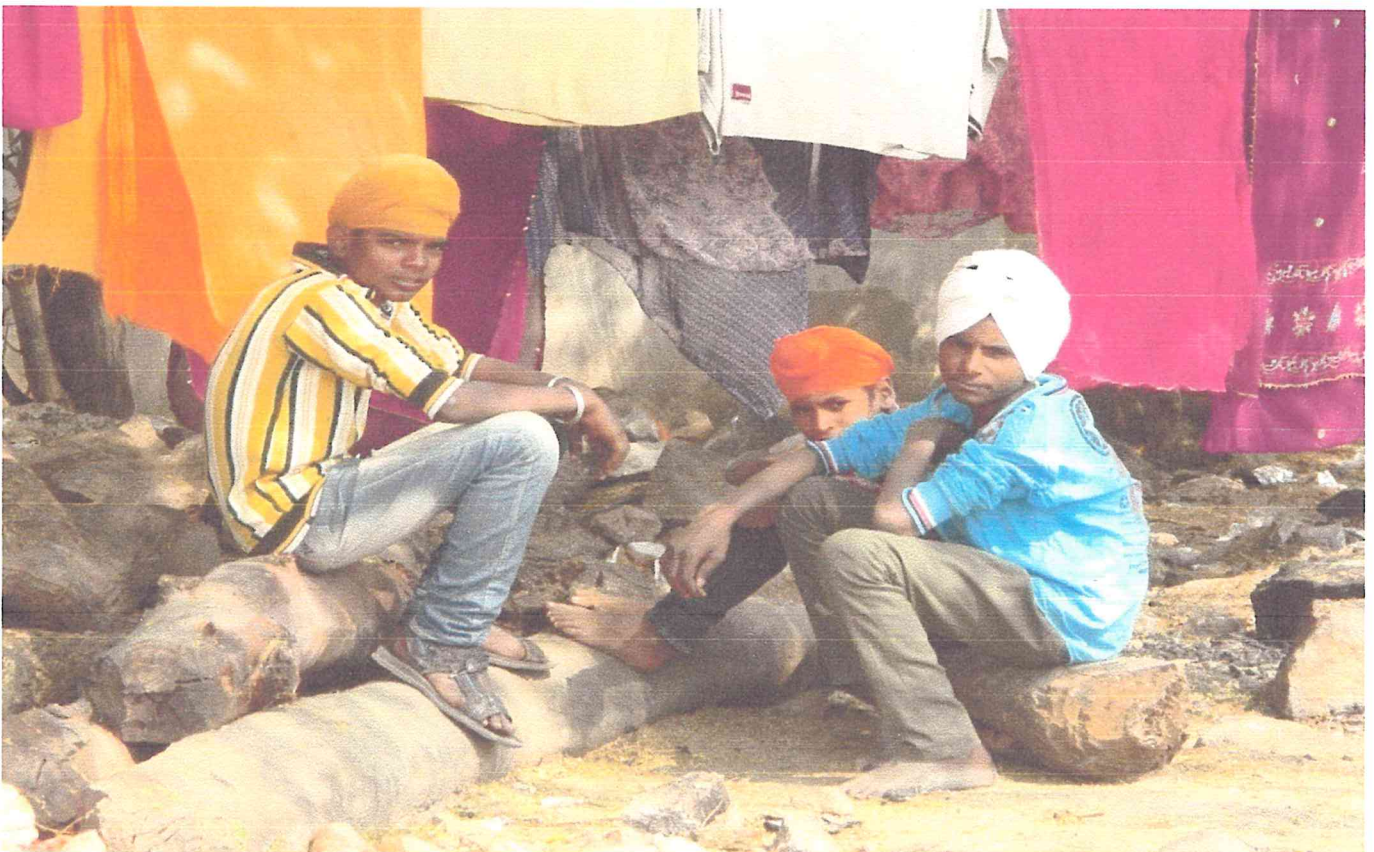
WORKSHOP OF SIKLIGAR



GURU GOBIND SINGH COLONY (RRD)



LEADERS OF SIKLIGAR SAMAJ AND BOYS (HYDERABAD)





SIKLIGAR WOMAN AT THE ENTERANCE OF HER HOME



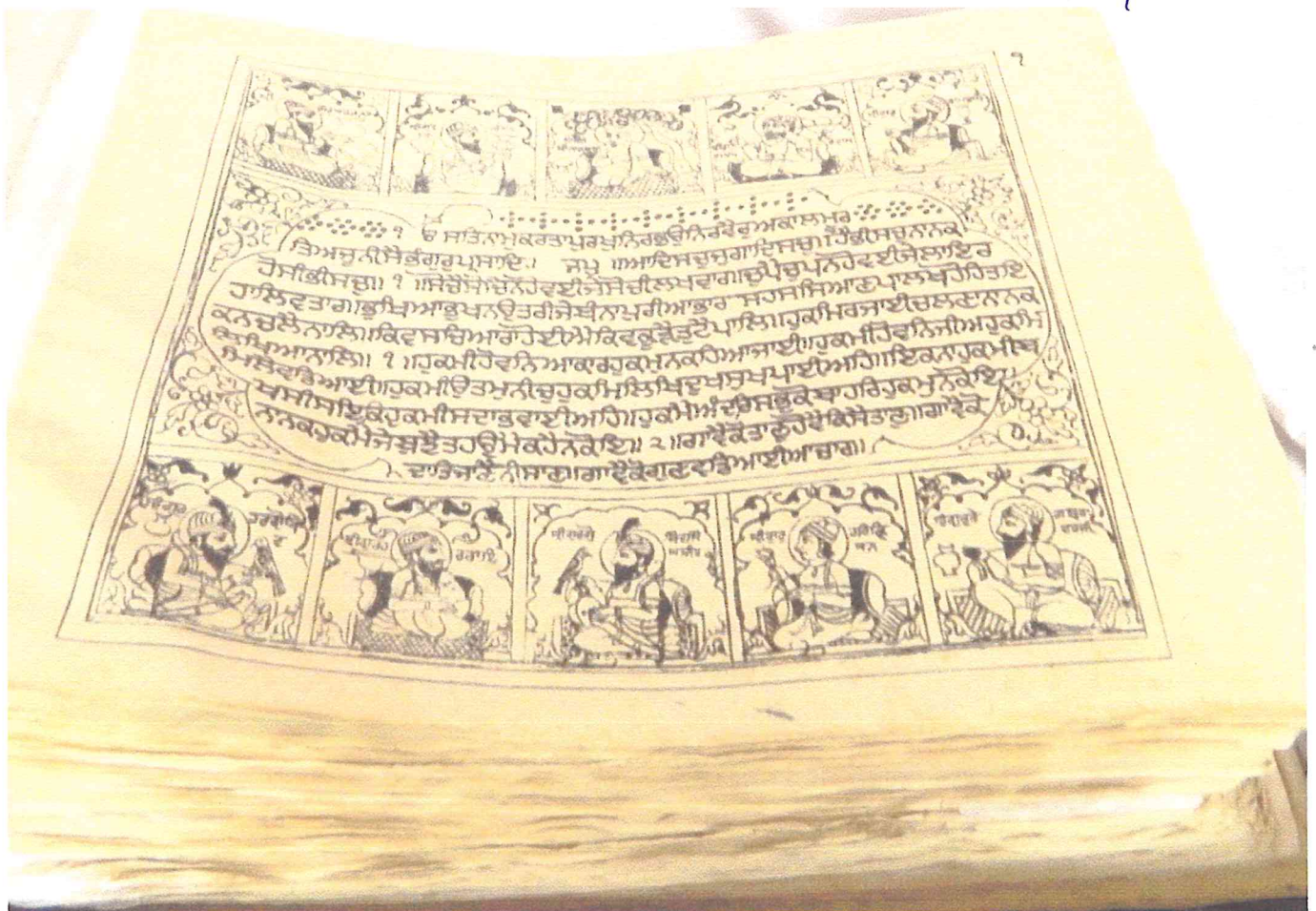
400



RESIDENCES AT SIKH CHHAWNI

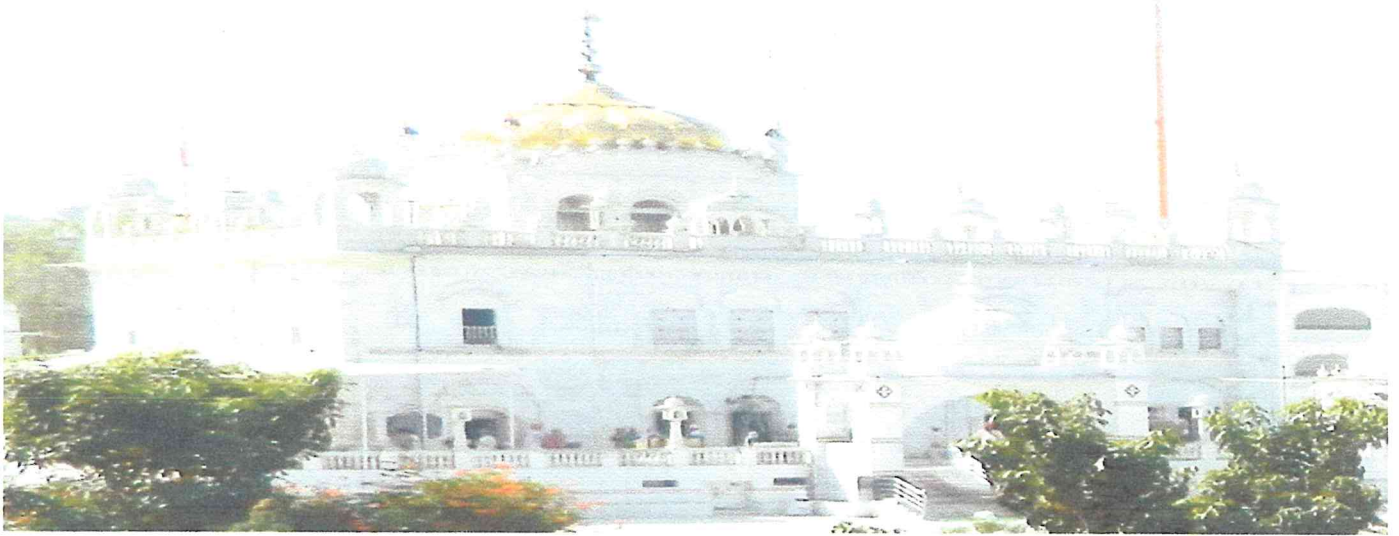


207



GRANTH SAHIB AND AN OLD GUN AT GURUDWARA SIKH CHHAWNI





GURUDWARA SRI HAZOOR SAHIB (NANDED)



**BABA KULWANT SINGH, A DAKHANI SIKH
(HEAD GRANTHI OF SRI HAZOOR SAHIB)**



GURDWARA NANAK JHIRA (BIDAR)



OLD GURUDWARA SIKH CHHAWNI (HYDERABAD)



KIRTANI JATHA OF BANJARA SIKHS (Gurdwara Nanak Jhira)



DAKHANI SIKH



OLD AND NEW CENTRAL GURUDWARA BARKOLA (1825)



406



KAMAKHAYA TEMPLE



GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S INSCRIPTION AT KAMAKHAYA

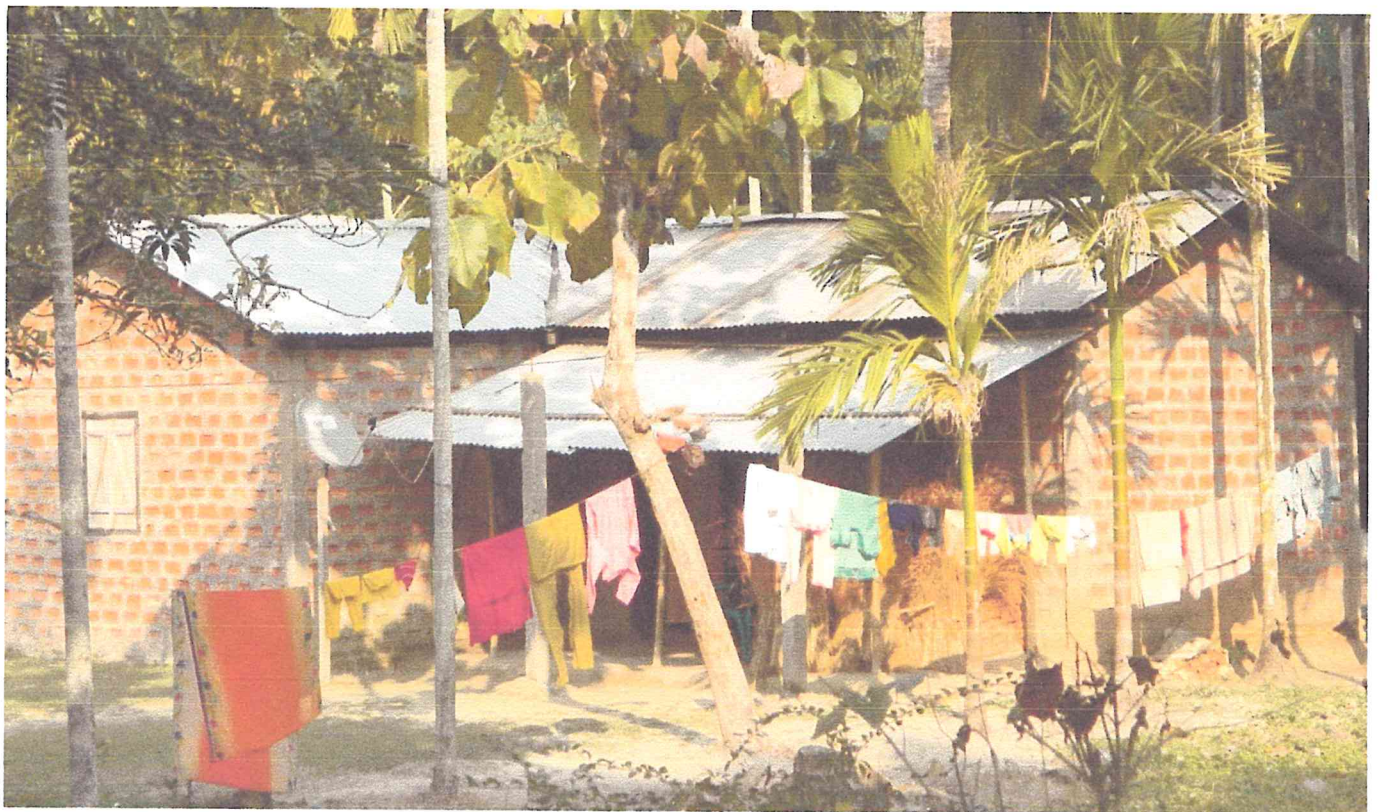


MARTYRS' MEMORIAL AT BARKOLA





AXOMIYA SIKHS (BARKOLA)



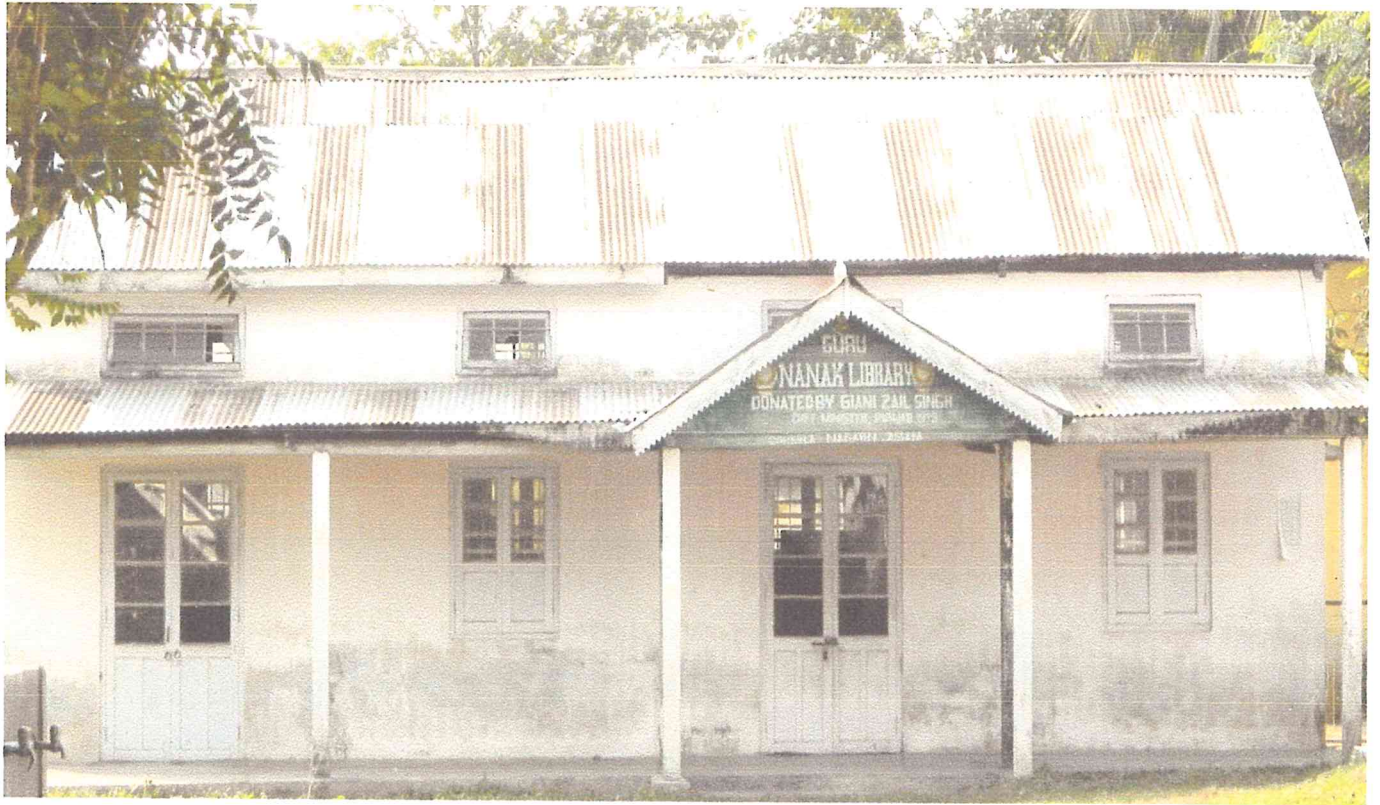
RESIDENCE AT BARKOLA



GURUDWARA MATA JI (CHAPARMUKH)



MATA JI'S CHAKKI AND GUNS



GURU NANAK LIBRARY AT BARKOLA (1975)



COMMUNITY CENTRE (BARKOLA)

411



A SIKH WOMAN AT GORA LINE (SHILLONG)



STREET SCENE (GORA LINE)



ENTRANCE TO GORA LINE COLONY (SHILLONG)



413



BARRA BAZAR (SHILLONG)



GURUDWARA NANAKSAR AT BARKOLA (1991)



GURUDWARA AT GORA LINE (SHILLONG)



dy 414