

Socio-Economic Plights of the Hira Community in Assam: An Overview

1. **Dr. Debendra Kumar Bezbaruah**, M.A., Ph.D., D. Litt
Principal, Kamrup College, Chamata, Nalbari, Assam.
2. **Dr. Tribeni Bezbarua**, M.A., Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Dept of Assamese,
North Kamrup College, Baghmara, Barpeta.

Abstract

In the book "Prachin Hindu Parichay" edited in 1461 by Sidheswar Siromoni and in the book named "Satya Sangrah" written by Amrit Lal Sarma in the name of Hira Devi - the original mother of Hira Jati, a caste with her progenies was formed and it came to be known as Hira Jati and the potteries, produced by them came to be known as Hira potteries i.e. locally known as Hira bachon. On the basis of historical fact a group of historians like Satyendra Nath Sarma (1989:303) opines that during the medieval period the potters belonging to Chandalas who produced potteries by manipulation of hands were called Hiras. According to Dr. Narendra Nath Bhattarchya (1987:288) the Hiras of Assam belong to one of the sub-castes of Chandalas. Though the Hiras were shown separately from the Chandalas in 1872 yet in 1881 the Hiras were included among the different sub-castes of Chandalas. According to the Report of the Census of Assam 1901 the Hira community is said to be a functional offshoot from the Namasudras. According to B.C. Allen (1905:88) a section of the Chandals has formed itself into a separate caste called Hira. Hiras and Chandalas are regarded as one and the same caste generally throughout the Assam valley, but in practice, they will never eat together nor inter-marry. Originally, the Hiras may have been simply a potter Chandal but the sub-caste may be separated distinctively in later period. So in the later censuses they have been separated from Chandalas. Scholars like Nabin Chandra Sarma are of the opinion that the Hiras are varnasankars as they are born as the outcome of the inter-caste marriage between the tribal and the non-tribal. Tribal women used to make earthen pots with their hand. Hira women learnt the art of making potteries from the tribal women from very ancient time.

According to some scholars a community is named according to occupation that it performs. Accordingly Hira Jati is defined in accordance with its occupation of making 'hira bachon' (i.e. different kinds of pots by using Hira clay). According to Nilamani Phukan (1987:18) the Hiras of Assam are the professional potters. That is, the Hiras are traditionally an occupational community engaged in pottery industry from very ancient time. From the very skill of making the cooking vessel i.e. Hari, the term 'Hira' takes its origin. So the people engaged in the pottery industry or Hari industry are called the Hiras. In course of time they have been introduced and identified as the people belonging to the Scheduled Castes.

Keywords : Hira Jati, 'hira bachon', Chandals, Namasudras, Assam

Results and discussion

Under this background depending on the secondary sources and census reports of different periods this article makes an attempt to highlight 1. demography: (a) size of population and trend, (b) sex ratio, 2. age distribution, 3. rural-urban composition, 4. education, 5. work participation rate, 6. occupation and category of workers, 7. religion, and 8 marital status

1. Demography: (a) Overall Population size and trend

Since the British rule there has been a variation of the size of population of the Hiras due to factors like inclusion of Hiras into the Chandalas or Namasudra. In the Census of 1881 both the Hiras and the Chandalas are counted because both are regarded as on the same level generally throughout the Assam valley. Table 1 reveals that the size of population of both the Hiras and the Chandalas was 32,222 in 1881. In 1872 census the size of population of Hiras was 6,473 and the size of population of Chandala was 23, 240 and the total population of both was 29,713 in number. So during the period of nine years from 1872 to 1881 the growth rate of population of both Hiras and the Namasudras was 0.9 per cent per annum.

The separation of population for both the Hiras and the Namasudras in 1872 census indicates that both are distinct communities with distinct culture. Since 1891 the counting of population of both the Hiras and the Namasudras separately has continued. Hence the size of population of the Hiras declined from 10,065 in 1891 to 8,708 in 1901 and therefore, the growth rate of population of the Hiras became negative i.e. it was (-)1.3 per cent per annum during the decade of 1891-1901.

In 1911 the size of population of the Hiras increased to 24,310 and therefore, the growth rate of population of them was as high as 8.9 per cent per annum during the decade of 1901-1911. But in the next decade of 1911-1921 it became negative i.e. (-) 0.1 per cent per annum. During the next four decades (1921-61) the annual growth of population of the Hiras was again positive i.e. about 2 per cent per annum and during the last decade of 1991-2001, it was almost 1 per cent. Of course, during the two decades of 1971-1991 it was almost as high as 3 per cent. Both in 1991 and in 2001 the proportion of population of the Hiras to total population of Scheduled Castes was the same as 3 per cent each. The growth of population Scheduled castes (4.1% per annum) was slightly higher than that of the population of the Hiras (2.6 per cent per annum) during the two decades of 1971-1991.

(b) Rural-urban size of population and growth rate

Table 2 present the population size of the Hiras against the Scheduled Castes along with their growth rate of population. Table 2 reveals that the urban growth rate of population of the Hira people was more than the rural ones (i.e. 9.0 per cent per annum against 2.2 per cent per annum of Hira people) during the two decades of 1971-1991. Similarly the rural growth rate of population of the Scheduled Castes during the same decades was half of the urban growth rate of population (i.e. 3.9 per cent against 8.4 per cent per annum). But the urban growth rate of population of Hira declined drastically from 9.0 per cent per annum during the two decades of 1971-1991 to 2.3 per cent per annum during the decade of 1991-2001. During the same decades rural population of the Hiras declined from 2.2 per cent per annum to 1.0 per cent. The same trend was observed in case of rural and urban growth rate of population for the Scheduled Castes in Assam.

Table 3 presents the size and annual growth rate of population of the Hiras of the undivided districts of Assam. Table 4.3 reveals that though in 1971 out of total population of the Hiras as high as 43.6 per cent was found in Nagaon district where annual growth rate of population of them was only 1.1 per cent during the decade of 1961-71. The highest growth rate of population of them was found in Darrang district (312.3% per annum during 1961-71).

Table 4 reveals that in Karimganj district the growth rate of population of the Hiras was as high as 67.0 per cent per annum during the decade of 1991-2001 while during the same decade it was 50.6 per cent per annum in Golaghat district and it was 44.0 per cent per annum in Dhemaji district, 32.2 per cent per annum in Tinsukia district and 20.6 per cent per annum in N.C. Hills. In two districts viz. Jorhat and Cachar the annual growth rate of population was about 13 per cent each. This high growth rate of population was either due to migration of S.C. Hiras from East-Bengal or due to inter district migration of their population.

In six districts the annual growth rate of them was negative viz. Kokrajhar (-1.8%), Dhubri (-1.9%), Barpeta (-0.2%), Nalbari (-0.5%), Karbi Anglong (-0.5%) and Hailakandi (-7.5%).

Table 5 presents district and rural-urban composition-wise the size and annual growth rate of the population of the Hiras.

Table 5 reveals that in 6 districts the annual growth rate of rural population of the Hiras became negative during the decade of 1991-2001 either because of migration if their population or because of their tendency to hide their caste identity due to lower social status of their caste.

During the decade of 1991-2001 the rural annual growth rate of population of them was more than 44 per cent in three district viz. as high as 70.8 per cent per annum in Karimganj district, 52.0 per cent per annum in Golaghat district and 44.9 per cent per annum in Dhemaji district. This high growth rate of their rural population was due to migration of the S.C. Hiras from East Bengal to Assam or due to inter-district migration of their population.

It has also been observed from Table 3 that in two districts the size of urban population of the Hiras increased abnormally. For example in Tinsukia district the size urban population of the Hiras increased from 1 in 1991 to 98 in 2001 and in N.C. Hills it increased from 3 in 1991 to 36 in 2001. So the urban growth rates of them in these two districts during the decade of 1991-2001 were as much as 970.0 per cent per annum and 110.0 per cent per annum respectively. This abnormal urban growth rate of population was due to migration of population from rural areas to urban areas. Similarly during the decade of 1991-2001 abnormal annual growth rate of urban population of them was seen in seven districts viz. Karimganj (55.0%), Golaghat (45.0%), Dibrugarh (33.7%), Jorhat (23.8%), Dhemaji (20.0%), Lakhimpur (15.0%) and Nagaon (13.6%).

In four districts the urban annual growth rate of the Hiras became negative because of migration of population from urban areas to rural areas or because of the tendency to hide their caste identity.

c) Sex composition

Sex ratio is an important social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equity between males and females in the society at a given point of time. Sex ratio has been defined as the number of females per 1000 males in the population. It is expressed as 'number of females per 1000 males as follows:

$$\text{Sex ratio} = \frac{\text{Number of females}}{\text{Number of males}} \times 1000$$

The sex ratio of Indian population has always been of topical interest for the demographers, social scientists, women's groups, research scholars and various planners and policy makers. Why is it that India has such uneven composition of population as compared to most of the developed countries in the world? Several reasons are adduced to explain the consistently low levels of sex ratio and their further decline in the country. Some of the important reasons put forward are listed below: i. neglect of the girl child resulting in their higher mortality at younger ages, ii. high maternal mortality, iii. sex selective female abortions, v. female infanticide, v. change in sex ratio at birth.

Table 6 reveals that the sex ratio of the Hiras declined from 1132 in 1901 to 1028 in 1911 sharply by 104 points and it increased to 1037 in 1921 by 9 points. But since 1931 the sex ratio of the Hiras has been unfavourable to females and it has been fluctuating. The sex ratio of the Hiras increased from 951 in 1931 to 968 in 1961 with an increase of 16 points and then it declined to 938 in 1971 with a decrease of 28 points. The decline of sex ratios of the Hiras and others, was due to the increasing practice of sex detection and selectively aborting female foetuses.

According to Saraswati Raju, "now technology makes it possible to select sex of unborn babies, desirable sex composition of children can be achieved without going into multiple pregnancies. The ideal composition is that of one son and one daughter - most families would stop at that. However, if the first two offspring are male babies, families do not feel the need for the third child, be it a boy or a girl albeit more so far girls" (Yojana July, 2011: 25).

The 'good news' is that female to male sex ratio of population of the Hiras has begun to improve from 954 in 1991 to 966 in 2001 by an increase of 12 points. Same is the case both for the Scheduled Castes and all people of Assam.

The sex ratio of the Hiras was always higher than that of the state level for both SCs (935) and all (935) in 2001. The sex ratio among the Scheduled Castes increased from 882 in 1961 to 917 in 1971 by 35 points and it increased to 919 in 1991 with an increase of 2 points and then to 935 in 2001 by an increase of 16 point.

Table 7 presents the differentials in rural-urban sex ratio of the Hiras, Scheduled Castes and all people of Assam. Table 7 reveals that though the sex ratios of both Hiras and of the SCs were favourable only in rural areas and these were more favourable among the Hiras than the SCs in Assam. The rural sex ratio of the Hiras increased from 943 in 1971 to 955 in 1991 and then it increased to 967 in 2001 while the urban sex ratio of them was lower than that of the rural ones.

The rural-urban gap in sex ratio of the Hiras declined from 213 points in 1961 to 8 points in 2001. Similarly the rural-urban gap in sex ratio of the Scheduled Castes which was 121 points in 1961 narrowed down and stood at 7 points in 2001.

Table 8 reveals that in 1961 census report the sex ratios were favourable in four districts, namely Goalpara (1106), Kamrup (1042), Darrang (1049) and Lakhimpur (1000). These sex ratios were unfavourable in these district in 1971 census report. But in 1971 census report the sex ratios were favourable in comparison to 1961 census report in three districts viz. Karbi-Anglang (1192), Nagaon (984) and Sivasagar (825).

Table 9 reveals as per 2001 census report the highest sex ratios were found in three districts namely Goalpara (1012), Barpeta (1012) and Cachar (1026). As per 1991 census report, the highest sex ratios were found in three districts also viz. Barpeta (1006), Nagaon (981) and Darrang (975).

Table 10 reveals that according to 2001 census report the rural sex ratio was the highest in three districts viz. Dhubri (1000), Goalpara (1004) and Cachar (1028). As per 2001 census report the urban sex ratio was the highest in Hailakandi district (3000) and the lowest sex ratio was found in N.C.Hills (364).

Table 11 reveals that as per 2001 census report the urban sex ratio of the Hiras was found to be the highest in seven districts namely Dhemaji (1250), Lakhimpur, (1143) Tinsukia (1130), Karimganj (1080), Barpeta (1106), Sonitpur (1000) and Cachar (1000).

2. Age distribution

Table 12 presents the age-wise percentage distribution of population of the Hiras and of the Scheduled Castes in Assam while Table 13 presents the age-wise size of population of both the Hiras and of the Scheduled Castes. From Table 13 it has been observed that as per 2001 census report there were as many as 18, 25,949 population of the Scheduled Castes. Of this population 55,106 population belonged to the Hiras.

Table 12 reveals that as per 2001 census report the percentage of non-school going student in the age group of 0-6 years was less among the Hiras (15.2%) than that of the SC people as whole (16.2%). In the age group of 0-6 years the percentage of the Hira people was equal for both male and female (i.e. about 15 per cent as per 2001 census report) but it was higher in the earlier census i.e. in 1991 for both male and female (about 19 per cent).

Table 12 shows that as per 2001 census report the proportion of Hira people in the age group of 7-19 years or those who were school-going but not yet entering the labour market increased from 30.2 per cent in 1991 to 48.5 per cent of the total in 2001 which was more than the percentage of S.C. people (31.2%) as per 2001 census report.

The proportion of the Hira people at the age group of 20-59 years, the real earner group of the society, known as economically active population declined from 44.7 per cent in 1991 to 30.7 per cent in 2001. But the proportion of S.C. people in this age group increased from 43.5 per cent in 1991 to 46.2 per cent in 2001.

Sex-wise economically active population of the Hiras (31.6%) was more than that of the female (29.8%) in 2001. But the female population of the Hiras in the age group of 20-59 years age group was less than that of the S.C. female (29.8% against 45.8% of S.C. female) in 2001.

3. Rural-urban composition of population

Table 14 reveals that the proportion of urban population of the Hira in total shot up from 6.0 per cent in 1961 to 10.7 per cent in 1991 and then to 11.7 per cent in 2001 either because of their employment in urban-oriented occupation or because of migration of their population from rural to urban areas and the rural population of them declined from 94.0 per cent in 1961 to 89.3 per cent in 1991 and then to 88.3 per cent in 2001.

In case of Scheduled Castes it has been observed that urban population increased slightly from 9.4 per cent in 1971 to 13.8 per cent in 1991 and then to 14.9 per cent in 2001 while the rural S.C. population declined marginally from 90.6 per cent to 86.2 per cent in 1991 and then to 85.1 per cent in 2001.

It is evident from Table 14 that rural-urban population ratio of the Hiras was high i.e. 15.7 in 1961 and 16.2 in 1971 which came down to 8.3 in 1991 and ultimately slid down to 7.5 in 2001.

Table 15 reveals that out of 23 districts in ten districts viz Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Kamrup, Nagaon, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat and N.C. Hills, the percentage of rural population of the Hiras increased from 1991 onwards. But in Assam in 1991 it was 89.3 per cent which increased to 88.3 in 2001. In Hailakandi 100 per cent Hira people live in rural areas.

In case of urban population it has been observed that from 1991 onwards in 11 districts the percentage of urban Hira population increased. In Dibrugarh district the urban population increased from 28.0 per cent in 1991 to 33.6 in 2001.

In three districts viz Nalbari, Darrang and Marigaon there is no change of urban population during the decade of 2001-1991.

4. Education

Education is an essential element of human resource development as it improves the knowledge and develops required skills among the individuals. It opens new worlds and provides access and mobility in the process enlarging opportunities and choices.

4.1 Overall Growth Rate in Literacy Rate

Table 16 presents the gradual growth of literacy rate of the Hiras and of the Scheduled Castes in Assam in comparison to state level.

Literacy rate of Assam was not satisfactory till 1961. It was only 32.5% among the general population, 24.7% among the Hiras and 24.4% among the Scheduled Caste population in Assam. But the literacy rate of the Scheduled Caste people of Assam was found better than the all India level Scheduled Caste literacy rate (10.3%) during that period.

As per the census report of 2001 of India, the literacy rate among the Scheduled Castes in Assam was 66.8 per cent, which was above the aggregated national figure for the Scheduled Castes i.e. 54.7 per cent. According to the census 2001, Hiras with 72.5% literacy rate is above the state average of the Scheduled Castes (66.8%).

In Assam literacy rate among the people of the Scheduled Castes increased from 24.4% in 1961 to 25.8% in 1971 showing an increase of 1.4 percentage points, 53.4% in 1991 with the jump of 28.1 percentage points and then it increased to 66.8% in 2001 with an increase of 12.9 percentage points.

Similarly at state level the literacy rate of the Hiras increased from 24.7% in 1971 to 59.1 per cent in 1991 with an increase of 31.7 percentage points and then to 72.5% in 2001 with an increase of 13.4 percentage points.

Since 1991 educational status of the Hiras has been rising more than that of SCs and of the general people at the state level. It indicates that they have not only been in a position to ameliorate their socio-economic well-being but also able to be more self-conscious as to the change of their educational status, development, rights, responsibilities and duties. This improvement of the educational status of them has taken place not only because of their self-effort but also because of the immense efforts on the part of the state government as to the provisions made for their all-round development like establishment of the schools, giving better facilities to access education at the earliest. Besides, the government has taken some initiatives to create awareness among the people with the help of different Medias, NGOs, different writers etc.

4.2 Sex-wise decadal growth rate in literacy

Table 17 presents the sex-wise decadal growth rate of the literacy rate of the Hiras, SC people and all people in Assam. During the decade of 1961-71 the decadal growth rates of literacy in both males and females of SC people and of all people became negative. The decrease in literacy rates in males and females of the Scheduled Castes are in the order of -2.8 and -0.4 percentage points respectively during the decade of 1961-1971. During the next two decades of 1971-1991 though the decadal growth rates in literacy of males and females of the Scheduled Caste people increased by 28.9 and 27.9 percentage points respectively, yet these growth rates were less than that of the growth rates of literacy of the males and females of the Hiras (32.0 percentage points and 27.9 percentage points respectively).

During the last decade of 1991-2001 the decadal growth rate in literacy of male and female of the Hiras , SCs and all was declining. Still then the male literacy rate had moved forward by 12.09 percentage points from 70.7 per cent in 1991 to 82.7 per cent in 2001 and among the females it had gone up by 14.8 percentage points from 47.0 per cent to 61.8 per cent during the decade of 1991-2001. But the decadal growth rate in literacy was higher among the Hira males (12.0 percentage points) than S.C males (11.8 percentage points), which was almost equal to the female literacy growth rate of all people. It has been observed that the female decadal growth in literacy of SC people was higher than the female of all people (11.6 percentage points).

4.3 Disparity in literacy

Education is an important social resource and a means of reducing inequality in the society. Beyond being a basic need, education, especially vocational, technical and professional, is necessary for job placement and acquiring a higher social status. With this realization the Union and State governments after independence have adopted policies and programmes for improvement of education. In order to make the Scheduled Castes including the Hiras educationally advance both the Union and States governments have provided the constitutional privileges. Despite these special facilities and protective discriminations in favour of them, they are still poor in education.

Measuring Disparity

In order to measure disparity in literacy rate between females and males and between rural and urban areas, the following index has been computed and analyzed here.

$$\text{Disparity Index (A, B)} = \frac{\text{Percent literates in group A}}{\text{Percent literates in group B}} \times 100$$

This index measures the performance of group A relative to group B. If literacy among group A is low relative to that of group B, the index will have a low value, less than 100. As literacy among group A rises relative to that among group B, the value of index rises and assumes the value 100 when literacy the groups are equal. Any deviation from 100 would thus be a measure of disparity between the groups. We has labelled the deprived group as group A. Consequently the value of the index will normally be less than 100 and higher the value lower is the disparity against group A.

Disparity in literacy rate

Table 18 presents disparity index and gender gap in literacy rate of the Hiras ,the Scheduled Castes and all people in Assam as per 1961, 1971 , 1991 and 2001 census reports. Table 18 reveals that as the gender gap of the Hiras decreased from 23.7 per cent in 1991 to 20.9 per cent in 2001 , the value of disparity index increased 66.5 per cent in 1991 to 74.7 per cent in 2001 .

In case of rural-urban-wise disparity index it has been observed that as the rural gender gap decreased from 24.6% in 1991 to 21.9 % in 2001 and thus, urban gender gap also decreased from 16.4% in 1991 to 14.5% in 2001 , the value of disparity index of both rural and urban Hira population increased correspondingly . In other words the value of disparity index for the Rural Hiras increased from 37.8% in 1971 to 64.7 in 1991 and then to 73.3 per cent in 2001 . Similarly the value of disparity index for the urban Hiras increased from 62.9 % in 1971 to 79.1% in 1991 and then to 83.6 per cent in 2001. Still then there is disparity (Table 4.16).

Though the value of disparity index was as high as about 75 per cent for both Hiras and the Scheduled Castes yet there is still a long way to go before the index reaches the value of 100 per cent, indicating no disparity.

From this analysis we can discern the fact that there is inverse relationship between the gender gap and disparity index. The lower the gender gap, the higher is the disparity index indicating little disparity and the higher the gender gap, the lower is the disparity index indicating existence high disparity .

4.4 The gender gap in literacy

If we consider female literacy rate in Assam for all groups - S.C. , Hiras and All people , then it is lower than the male literacy rate as many parents do not allow their female children to go to schools. They get married off at a young age instead . Many families , especially in rural areas believe that having a male child is better than having a baby girl . So male child gets all the benefits . Today ,as per 2001 census , male literacy rate was higher than female literacy rate not only among the Hiras , and among the Scheduled Castes but also among the general people. But it is good news that both male and female literacy rates of the Hiras exceed the literacy rates of both male and female of both the Scheduled Castes and the all people as a whole .

Though the target set by Planning Commission to reduce the gender gap by 10 per cent in 2011-12 has not been achieved yet the reduction by about 3 per cent for the Hiras and it is about 2 per cent each for S.C. people and all people as whole has been achieved which is a positive stride towards decreasing illiteracy . It is quite clear from Table 4.23 that the female literacy has increased and the gender gap had decreased, so both are showing a positive development in 2001

Table 18 reveals that the gap in male-female literacy rate of the Hiras marginally increased from 23.4 percentage points in 1971 to 23.7 percentage points in 1991 and it went down to 20.9 percentage points in 2001. In other words the gender gap in literacy of the Hiras increased by - 0.3 per cent in 1971-1991 and then it decreased by 2.8 per cent in 1991-2001. Similarly the gender gap in male-female literacy rate of the Scheduled Castes marginally declined from 21.7 percentage points in 1961 to 19.3 percentage points in 1971

which again increased to 20.9 percentage points in 1991 and then it again went down to 18.6 percentage points in 2001. In other words the gender gap in case of SC people declined by 2.4 per cent in 1961-1971 and after that it increased by (-) 1.6 per cent in 1971-1991 and during the next decade of 1991-2001 it declined by 2.3 per cent which was almost equal to all people. The gender gap in literacy of all people declined fast by 5 per cent in 1961-1971 and then by 1.8 per cent in 1971-91. These declines are bound to be slow initially as a result of the continuing past legacy of a large number of adult illiterate women. Naturally, the gender gap in the spread of literacy began to narrow first in 1971 and the pace has accelerated.

4.5 Gap in rural-urban literacy rate

Table 19 reveals that the rural literacy rate of the Hira community increased from 26.6 % in 1971 to 57.7 % in 1991 with the jump of 31.1 percentage points and then to 71.3% in 2001 with an increase of 13.6 percentage points. But during these periods the growth rate of literacy rate of the Hiras was more than the literacy rate of the Scheduled Castes. Similarly the urban literacy rate of the Hiras increased from 40.6 per cent in 1971 to 76.0 per cent in 1991 with the jump of 35.4 percentage points and then to 81.3 per cent in 2001 showing with an increase of 5.3 percentage points. But these percentages of literacy rate were also higher than that of the Scheduled Castes.

According to 1991 census report the rural literacy rate of the Scheduled Castes population was 52.0 per cent while it was 49.3 per cent for all people of the state. The literacy rate of rural male SC population (62.2%) was higher than all rural male population (58.7%). Similarly the literacy rate of the rural female SC population (40.7%) was also higher than all rural female population (39.7%) of the state as per 1991 census report.

In case of urban literacy rate, Table 4.17 reveals that the urban literacy rate of all people is higher than the urban literacy rate of the SC population (i.e. 79.4% literacy rate of all population against 65.7% urban literacy rate of SC population). Similarly the literacy rates of both urban males and females of all people are more than the literacy rates of SC urban males and females.

As per 2001 census report the rural-urban difference of Hira is low (10.0%) while it is high for Scheduled Caste People (12%). Similar trend is observed for both males and females of Hira people and S.C. people of the state of Assam.

A positive development during the reference period has been that the literacy rate improved at a faster rate in rural areas as compared to urban areas. As a result, the gap in rural-urban literacy rate narrowed down from 18.3 percentage points in 1991 to 10.0 percentage points in 2001. In case of Scheduled Castes the gap in rural-urban literacy rate came down from 13.7 3 percentage points in 1991 to 12.0 percentage points in 2001. The gap in rural-urban literacy rate for both males and females of the Hiras is low as compared to Scheduled Castes as a whole.

Despite several measures taken by central and state government, literacy rate of the Hiras and of the S.C. people remains to be low in Assam, particularly in rural areas, calling for reduction in poverty and unemployment in the hinterland.

4.6 Educational Level of the Hira

Table 20 reveals that in comparison to Scheduled Castes though the literacy rate of the Hiras was only high yet the percentage of Hira people who have education up to below primary and primary level was less than that of the Scheduled Castes as a whole. The percentage of graduate degree holders and above of the Hiras was almost equal to the Scheduled Castes (2.5%) as per 2001 census report. The percentage of matriculates of the Hiras increased from 9.4% in 1991 to 15.2 % in 2001. Similarly the percentage of higher secondary or /P.U of the Hiras increased from 2.6% in 1991 to 4.5 % in 2001.

Table 21 presents the percentage distribution of educational level of the Hiras by sex as per 1991 and 2001 census reports. Table 4.21 reveals that the percentage of female with non-formal or formal education or primary or middle school was higher than that of the males. But from matriculation onwards the percentage of males with different education level is more than that of the females. This is the reason why the male literacy rate of the Hira community is higher than the female literacy rate yet as per 2001 census report.

5. Work participation rate (WPR)

Table 22 presents the percentage distribution of total, main, marginal workers among the Hiras and SCs.

According to 2001 census report the percentage of Hira workers to total population (WPR) is 37.0 % which is higher than the participation rate of SCs (34.4%). Of the total Hira workers, 71.5 per cent have been recorded as main workers and 28.5 per cent as marginal workers. The female WPR is only 24.2 per cent which is lower than their male counterparts (49.4 per cent) as per 2001 census report. The work participation of the main male workers of the Hiras (85.9%) is slightly higher than that of the SCs (85.4%) as per 2001 census report.

6. Occupation and Category of Workers

In a caste-ridden society, there is a gradation of occupation also. Some occupations are considered to be superior or sacred, while certain others degrading and inferior. For a long time occupations were very much associated with caste system. Each caste had its specific occupations and the occupations were almost hereditary. The caste system puts restriction on the range of social relation also. The idea of pollution makes their point clear. It means that a touch of a higher caste man particularly by the Scheduled castes defiles a man of higher caste. Even his shadow is a considered enough to pollute a high caste man. In Kerala for a long time a Nayar could approach a Nambudari Brahmin but could not touch him. Even a Tiyan was expected to keep himself at a distance of 36 steps from Brahmins and a Pulaya at a distance 96 paces. They were considered to be unholy, inferior, low and were looked down upon by other castes. The society even

today suffers from the stigma of untouchables .But though the scheduled castes including Hiras of Assam are now a days not untouchable yet the socio-economic status of them is dismally low .

Profession of pottery

The community is carrying the profession of pottery from very ancient time.Due to introduction of hard material utensils in the market namely aluminum and other hard pots, the demand for this breakable pots is decreasing in the market. The barter system prevailing in this community in earthen pots has almost gone extinct. The members of the community used to exchange their pots for paddy in the tribal villages specially in the harvest season.They used to carry a full boat-load of pots up-streams the small rivers to the tribal villages and exchanged these for paddy and returned with a full boat-load of paddy which in most cases were more than the actual consumption of the family. The tribal used these pots for preparation of drinks.Now this barter system has been in almost dead as the tribal villagers are gradually leaving the drinking habits.

At present the Hiras sell their products in weekly hats and Bazaars carrying the pots in "Bhar".This gives them very little profits quite insufficient even for their bare maintenance. Sometimes they are compelled to sell these pots at a very low price to the Paikaris from their home.

They have market link with other neighbouring districts and Satras.They have trade link with customers of different ethnic groups like Garo,Rabha,Bodo,Mlech,Bhutia and Muslims.

Before independence, wholesale buyers from far slung places of South use to come to Marnoi areas of Goalpara for purchasing potteries.After partition, their market has become restricted.Still vessels like dibia, boria , kalah , charu, khola , lurki , i.e. earthen waves have ready market in the state.

Table 23 reveals that according to 2001 census report out of the total of main workers of the Hiras 36.2 per cent depended on cultivation as cultivators. This percentage was higher than the percentage of S.C. people as cultivators (32.7%).The percentage of agricultural labour of the Hira community was less than the agricultural labour of the SCs (5.9% against 8.1 %). The percentage of household industry workers was higher among the Hiras (14.2%) than among the Scheduled Castes (5.1%).

The remaining more than half of the total main workers of Scheduled Castes (54.1 per cent) returned as 'other workers' outside agriculture and household industry. The percentage of other workers was more among the Scheduled Castes than that of the Hiras (43.6%) .

7. Religion

As to religion of the Hiras Table 24 reveals that out of 55,106 population of the Hira community 99.9 per cent belong to Hindu religion whiles the negligible percentage belong to Sikhs and Buddhists. Same is the case for the Scheduled Castes.

8. Marital status

Marital status indicates whether a person or a man or a woman is married, marriageable, unmarried or widow or widower or divorced. It implies the number of marriages that the person is solemnizing. The institution of marriage in our society has been quite complicated affair because of prevalence of practices like widow marriage; intercaste marriage and dowry system .In the social change taking place at present, traditional values of marriage are fast dying out

Table 25 presents the marital status of the Hiras and the Scheduled Castes in Assam as per 2001 census report

Table 25 reveals that as per 2001 census report the percentage of currently married person of the Hiras (40.1%) was higher than that of the Scheduled Castes as a whole (39.6%).Similarly the percentages of currently married males (38.5%) and females (41.7%) of the Hiras were higher than the currently married males (37.9%) and females (41.5%) of the Scheduled Castes.

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Reference tables

Table 1: Size of Population and Annual Growth Rate of the Scheduled Castes as compared to Hira of Assam

| years | Persons | | | | % Hira to SCs |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Hira | Growth rate | SCs | Growth rate | |
| 1872 | (6,473+ *23,240)= **29,713 | - - - | - - - | - - - | - - - |
| 1881 | ***32,222 | 0.9 | - | - | 2.1 |
| 1891 | 10,065 | -6.9 | 4,88,138 | - | 1.5 |
| 1901 | 8,708 | -1.3 | 5,68,758 | 1.7 | - |
| 1911 | 16,348 | 8.9 | - | - | - |
| 1921 | 14,666 | -1.0 | - | - | 3.0 |
| 1931 | 17,000 | 1.6 | 5,71,000 | 0.01 | 3.5 |
| 1961 | 25,835 | 1.7 | 7,31,490 | 0.9 | 3.6 |
| 1971 | 32,622 | 2.6 | 9,12,557 | 2.5 | 3.0 |
| 1991 | 49,336 | 2.6 | 16,59,412 | 4.1 | |
| 2001 | 55,106 | 1.2 | 18,25,949 | 1.0 | |

Source: Census of India, Assam : 1961 (p-32), 1971 , 1991 and 2001

Census Report of India 1981 , Part -X D Series -3 Assam , Survey Report on Pottery as practised by Hiras in Assam p.77

*The population figure belongs to Chandala in 1872

**The population figure belongs to Chandala plus Hira in 1872

***The census report of 1881 counted the population of Hiras and Chandalas taken together.

Note : The population figures of the Hiras from 1872 to 1881 belong to the Assam Valley but the population figures from 1891 onwards belong to Assam as a whole

***The census report of 1881 counted the population of Hiras and Chandalas taken together.

Note : The population figures of the Hiras from 1872 to 1881 belong to the Assam Valley but the population

2

Rural-urban Growth Rate of Population of Hiras against the Scheduled Castes in Assam :1971, 1991 & 2001

| Communities | Years | Rural | Urban | Growth rate | |
|-----------------|-------|-----------|----------|-------------|-------|
| | | | | Rural | Urban |
| Hira | 1961 | 24,310 | 1,546 | - | - |
| | 1971 | 30,746 | 1,878 | 2.6 | 2.1 |
| | 1991 | 44,080 | 5,256 | 2.2 | 9.0 |
| | 2001 | 48,652 | 6,454 | 1.0 | 2.3 |
| S.C. Population | 1961 | 670984 | 60,506 | - | - |
| | 1971 | 8,26,834 | 85,723 | 2.3 | 4.2 |
| | 1991 | 14,30,131 | 2,29,281 | 3.9 | 8.4 |
| | 2001 | 15,53,691 | 2,72,258 | 0.9 | 1.9 |

Source: Census of India, Assam: 1991 and 2001

Table 3
Undivided District -wise Distribution of Size and annual growth rate of
Hira Population of Assam, 1961 and 1971

| Districts | 1961 | 1971 | Growth Rate 1961-1971 | % |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| 1.Goalpara | 2698 | 4,776 | 7.7 | 14.6 |
| 2. Kamrup | 8834 | 9,398 | 0.6 | 28.8 |
| 3. Darrang | 881 | 3,159 | 312.3 | 9.7 |
| 4. Lakhimpur | 98 | 639 | 55.2 | 2.0 |
| 5. Sibsagar | 375 | 345 | -0.8 | 1.1 |
| 6. Nagaon | 12,869 | 14,237 | 1.1 | 43.6 |
| 7. Cachar | - | 9 | - | 0.03 |
| 8. NC.Hills | 80 | 2 | -9.8 | 0.01 |
| 9.Karbi Anglong | 10 | 57 | 47.0 | 0.2 |
| Hira in Assam | 25,835 | 32,622 | 2.6 | 100.0 |

Source: Census of India, Assam : 1971 and 1961

**Table 4: District -wise Distribution of Size annual growth rate of
Hira Population of Assam**

| Districts | 1991 | 2001 | Growth Rate 2001-1991 |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| 1.Kokrajhar | 291 | 238 | -1.8 |
| 2. Dhubri | 734 | 593 | -1.9 |
| 3. Goalpara | 2934 | 3465 | 1.8 |
| 4. Bongaigaon | 2330 | 2539 | 0.9 |
| 5. Barpeta | 4352 | 4250 | -0.2 |
| 6. Kamrup | 7799 | 8320 | 0.7 |
| 7. Nalbari | 3229 | 3057 | -0.5 |
| 8. Darrang | 4019 | 4863 | 2.1 |
| 9. Marigaon | 16045 | 17928 | 1.2 |
| 10. Nagaon | 5575 | 6346 | 1.4 |
| 11. Sonitpur | 737 | 1030 | 4.0 |
| 12. Lakhimpur | 85 | 137 | 6.1 |
| 13. Dhemaji | 89 | 481 | 44.0 |
| 14. Tinsukia | 46 | 185 | 30.2 |
| 15.Dibrugarh | 125 | 183 | 4.6 |
| 16. Sibsagar | 217 | 288 | 3.3 |
| 17. Jorhat | 38 | 88 | 13.2 |
| 18. Golaghat | 31 | 188 | 50.6 |
| 19.Karbi Anglong | 568 | 539 | -0.5 |
| 20. NC. Hills | 18 | 55 | 20.6 |
| 21. Cachar | 33 | 77 | 13.3 |
| 22. Karimganj | 33 | 254 | 67.0 |
| 23. Hailakandi | 33 | 2 | -7.5 |
| Hira in Assam | 49,336 | 55,106 | 1.2 |

Source : Census of India, Assam : 1991 and 2001

Table 5
Rural-Urban -wise Distribution of Size annual growth rate of
Hira Population of Each District of Assam

| Districts | Rural | | | Urban | | |
|-------------------|-------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|-----------|
| | 2001 | 1991 | 1991-2001 | 2001 | 1991 | 1991-2001 |
| 1. Kokrajhar | 140 | 193 | -2.7 | 98 | 98 | 0 |
| 2. Dhubri | 244 | 124 | 9.7 | 349 | 610 | -4.3 |
| 3. Goalpara | 2914 | 2345 | 2.4 | 551 | 589 | -0.6 |
| 4. Bongaigaon | 2182 | 2052 | 0.6 | 357 | 278 | 2.8 |
| 5. Barpeta | 3296 | 3724 | -0.1 | 954 | 628 | 5.2 |
| 6. Kamrup | 6709 | 6610 | 0.1 | 1611 | 1189 | 3.5 |
| 7. Nalbari | 3032 | 3208 | -0.5 | 25 | 21 | 1.6 |
| 8. Darrang | 4744 | 3924 | 2.1 | 119 | 95 | 2.5 |
| 9. Marigaon | 16371 | 14635 | 1.2 | 1557 | 1410 | 1.0 |
| 10. Nagaon | 6148 | 5491 | 1.1 | 198 | 84 | 13.6 |
| 11. Sonitpur | 958 | 666 | 4.4 | 72 | 71 | 0.1 |
| 12. Lakhimpur | 107 | 73 | 4.7 | 30 | 12 | 15.0 |
| 13. Dhemaji | 472 | 86 | 44.9 | 9 | 3 | 20.0 |
| 14. Tinsukia | 87 | 45 | 9.3 | 98 | 1 | 970.0 |
| 15. Dibrugarh | 30 | 90 | -6.7 | 153 | 35 | 33.7 |
| 16. Sibsagar | 253 | 200 | 2.7 | 35 | 17 | 10.6 |
| 17. Jorhat | 34 | 22 | 5.5 | 54 | 16 | 23.8 |
| 18. Golaghat | 155 | 25 | 52.0 | 33 | 6 | 45.0 |
| 19. Karbi Anglong | 480 | 490 | -0.2 | 59 | 78 | -2.4 |
| 20. N.C. Hills | 19 | 15 | 2.7 | 36 | 3 | 110.0 |
| 21. Cachar | 73 | 29 | 15.2 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| 22. Karimganj | 202 | 25 | 70.8 | 52 | 8 | 55.0 |
| 23. Hailakandi | 2 | 8 | -7.5 | 0 | 8 | -10.0 |
| Hira | 48652 | 44,080 | 1.0 | 6454 | 5,256 | 2.3 |

Source : Census of India, Assam : 1991 and 2001

Table: 6

Size of Population and Sex Ratio of the Hira Against the Scheduled Castes

| Years | Hira | | | Scheduled Castes | | | Sex ratio of all | Variation (points) | | |
|-------|--------|--------|-----------|------------------|----------|-----------|------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|
| | Male | Female | Sex ratio | Male | Female | Sex ratio | | Hira | S.C | All |
| | 1901 | 4,082 | 4,619 | 1132 | | | | | - | - |
| 1911 | 8060 | 8,288 | 1028 | | | | | -104 | - | - |
| 1921 | 7,200 | 7,466 | 1037 | | | | | 9 | - | - |
| 1931 | 8,522 | 8,106 | 951 | | | | | -86 | - | - |
| 1961 | 13,131 | 12,704 | 967 | 3,88,564 | 3,42,926 | 883 | 869 | 16 | - | - |
| 1971 | 16,828 | 15,794 | 939 | 4,76,150 | 4,36,407 | 917 | 896 | -28 | 34 | 27 |
| 1991 | 25,249 | 24,087 | 954 | 8,64,617 | 7,94,795 | 919 | 923 | 16 | 2 | 27 |
| 2001 | 28031 | 27075 | 966 | 9,43,674 | 8,82,275 | 935 | 935 | 12 | 16 | 12 |

Source: Census of India, Assam: 1961 , 1971 , 1991 and 2001

Table .7: Differentials in Rural-urban Sex Ratio of the Hira and of the Scheduled Castes in Assam : 1991 & 2001

| Communities | Years | Rural | | Sex Ratio | Urban | | Sex Ratio | Rural-Urban Difference |
|-----------------|-------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|------------------------|
| | | Male | Female | | Male | Female | | |
| Hira | 2001 | 24736 | 23916 | 967 | 3295 | 3159 | 959 | 8 |
| | 1991 | 22,543 | 21,537 | 955 | 2,706 | 2,550 | 942 | 13 |
| | 1971 | 15,820 | 14,926 | 943 | 1,010 | 868 | 859 | 84 |
| | 1961 | 12,266 | 12,044 | 982 | 874 | 672 | 769 | 213 |
| S.C. Population | 2001 | 8,02,548 | 7,51,143 | 936 | 1,41,126 | 1,31,132 | 929 | 7 |
| | 1991 | 7,43,834 | 6,86,297 | 923 | 1,20,783 | 1,08,498 | 898 | 25 |
| | 1971 | 4,30,287 | 3,96,547 | 922 | 45,863 | 39,860 | 869 | 53 |
| | 1961 | 355,033 | 317,053 | 893 | 34,238 | 26,432 | 772 | 121 |

Source: Census of India, Assam:1961,1971, 1991 and 2001

Table 8 : Undivided District-wise Sex Ratio of the Hira : 1991 and 2001

| Districts | 1971 | | | 1961 | | |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|--------------|---------------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Sex Ratio | Male | Female | Sex Ratio |
| 1.Goalpara | 2,543 | 2,233 | 878 | 1281 | 1417 | 1106 |
| 2. Kamrup | 4,787 | 4,611 | 963 | 4327 | 4507 | 1042 |
| 3. Darrang | 1,603 | 1,556 | 971 | 430 | 451 | 1049 |
| 4. Lakhimpur | 359 | 280 | 780 | 49 | 49 | 1000 |
| 5. Sibsagar | 189 | 156 | 825 | 215 | 160 | 744 |
| 6. Nagaon | 7,310 | 6,927 | 948 | 6784 | 6085 | 897 |
| 7. Cachar | 9 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8. NC.Hills | 2 | - | - | 45 | 35 | 778 |
| 9.Karbi Anglong * | 26 | 31 | 1192 | 54 | 47 | 870 |
| Hira in Assam | 16,828 | 15,794 | 939 | 13131 | 12,704 | 967 |

Source: Census of India, Assam : 1961 and 1971

Table 9 : District-wise Sex Ratio of the Hira : 1991 and 2001

| Districts | 2001 | | | 1991 | | |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|---------------|---------------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Sex Ratio | Male | Female | Sex Ratio |
| 1.Kokrajhar | 137 | 101 | 737 | 165 | 126 | 764 |
| 2. Dhubri | 299 | 294 | 983 | 380 | 354 | 932 |
| 3. Goalpara | 1722 | 1743 | 1012 | 1488 | 1446 | 972 |
| 4. Bongaigaon | 1274 | 1265 | 993 | 1195 | 1135 | 950 |
| 5. Barpeta | 2112 | 2138 | 1012 | 2170 | 2182 | 1006 |
| 6. Kamrup | 4240 | 4080 | 962 | 4045 | 3754 | 928 |
| 7. Nalbari | 1572 | 1485 | 945 | 1646 | 1583 | 962 |
| 8. Darrang | 2521 | 2342 | 929 | 2035 | 1984 | 975 |
| 9. Marigaon | 9094 | 8834 | 971 | 8199 | 7846 | 957 |
| 10. Nagaon | 3199 | 3147 | 948 | 2814 | 2761 | 981 |
| 11. Sonitpur | 539 | 491 | 911 | 407 | 330 | 811 |
| 12. Lakhimpur | 75 | 62 | 827 | 49 | 36 | 735 |
| 13. Dhemaji | 256 | 225 | 879 | 49 | 40 | 816 |
| 14. Tinsukia | 97 | 88 | 907 | 25 | 21 | 840 |
| 15.Dibrugarh | 95 | 88 | 926 | 65 | 60 | 923 |
| 16. Sibsagar | 147 | 141 | 959 | 111 | 106 | 955 |
| 17. Jorhat | 52 | 36 | 692 | 22 | 16 | 729 |
| 18. Golaghat | 99 | 89 | 899 | 24 | 7 | 291 |
| 19.Karbi Anglong | 289 | 250 | 865 | 304 | 264 | 868 |
| 20. NC.Hills | 45 | 10 | 222 | 13 | 5 | 385 |
| 21. Cachar | 38 | 39 | 1026 | 21 | 12 | 571 |
| 22. Karimganj | 129 | 125 | 969 | 20 | 13 | 650 |
| 23. Hailakandi | 0 | 2 | 0 | 21 | 12 | 571 |
| Hira in Assam | 28,031 | 27,075 | 966 | 25,249 | 24,087 | 954 |

Source: Census of India, Assam :1991 and 2001

Table 10 : District-wise Rural Sex Ratio of Hira: 1991 and 2001

| Districts | 2001 | | | 1991 | | |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|---------------|---------------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Sex Ratio | Male | Female | Sex Ratio |
| 1.Kokrajhar | 76 | 64 | 842 | 109 | 84 | 771 |
| 2. Dhubri | 122 | 122 | 1000 | 68 | 56 | 824 |
| 3. Goalpara | 1454 | 1460 | 1004 | 1194 | 1151 | 964 |
| 4. Bongaigaon | 1094 | 1088 | 995 | 1044 | 1008 | 966 |
| 5. Barpeta | 1659 | 1637 | 987 | 1872 | 1852 | 989 |
| 6. Kamrup | 3405 | 3304 | 970 | 3417 | 3193 | 934 |
| 7. Nalbari | 1557 | 1475 | 947 | 1633 | 1575 | 964 |
| 8. Darrang | 2457 | 2287 | 931 | 1985 | 1939 | 977 |
| 9. Marigaon | 8308 | 8064 | 971 | 7485 | 7150 | 955 |
| 10. Nagaon | 3088 | 3060 | 991 | 2772 | 2719 | 981 |
| 11. Sonitpur | 503 | 455 | 905 | 361 | 305 | 845 |
| 12. Lakhimpur | 61 | 46 | 754 | 43 | 30 | 698 |
| 13. Dhemaji | 252 | 220 | 873 | 47 | 39 | 830 |
| 14. Tinsukia | 51 | 36 | 706 | 25 | 20 | 800 |
| 15.Dibrugarh | 18 | 12 | 667 | 47 | 43 | 915 |
| 16. Sibsagar | 127 | 126 | 992 | 104 | 96 | 923 |
| 17. Jorhat | 20 | 14 | 700 | 15 | 7 | 467 |
| 18. Golaghat | 79 | 76 | 962 | 18 | 7 | 389 |
| 19.Karbi Anglong | 252 | 228 | 905 | 257 | 233 | 907 |
| 20. NC.Hills | 14 | 5 | 357 | 11 | 4 | 364 |
| 21. Cachar | 36 | 37 | 1028 | 18 | 11 | 611 |
| 22. Karimganj | 104 | 98 | 942 | 16 | 9 | 563 |
| 23. Hailakandi | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 3000 |
| Hira in Assam | 24,736 | 23,916 | 967 | 22,543 | 21,537 | 955 |

Source: Census of India, Assam :1991 and 2001

Table 11: District-wise Urban Sex Ratio of the Hira : 1991 and 2001

| Districts | 2001 | | | 1991 | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Sex Ratio | Male | Female | Sex Ratio |
| 1.Kokrajhar | 61 | 37 | 607 | 56 | 42 | 750 |
| 2. Dhubri | 177 | 172 | 972 | 312 | 298 | 955 |
| 3. Goalpara | 268 | 283 | 769 | 294 | 295 | 1003 |
| 4. Bongaigaon | 180 | 177 | 983 | 151 | 127 | 841 |
| 5. Barpeta | 453 | 501 | 1106 | 298 | 330 | 1107 |
| 6. Kamrup | 835 | 776 | 929 | 628 | 561 | 893 |
| 7. Nalbari | 15 | 10 | 667 | 13 | 8 | 615 |
| 8. Darrang | 64 | 55 | 859 | 50 | 45 | 900 |
| 9. Marigaon | 787 | 770 | 978 | 714 | 696 | 975 |
| 10. Nagaon | 111 | 87 | 784 | 42 | 42 | 1000 |
| 11. Sonitpur | 36 | 36 | 1000 | 46 | 25 | 543 |
| 12. Lakhimpur | 14 | 16 | 1143 | 6 | 6 | 1000 |
| 13. Dhemaji | 4 | 5 | 1250 | 2 | 1 | 500 |
| 14. Tinsukia | 46 | 52 | 1130 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 15.Dibrugarh | 77 | 76 | 987 | 18 | 17 | 944 |
| 16. Sibsagar | 20 | 15 | 750 | 7 | 10 | 1429 |
| 17. Jorhat | 32 | 22 | 688 | 7 | 9 | 1286 |
| 18. Golaghat | 20 | 13 | 650 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| 19.Karbi Anglong | 37 | 22 | 595 | 47 | 31 | 660 |
| 20. NC.Hills | 31 | 5 | 161 | 2 | 1 | 500 |
| 21. Cachar | 2 | 2 | 1000 | 3 | 1 | 333 |
| 22. Karimganj | 25 | 27 | 1080 | 4 | 4 | 1000 |
| 23. Hailakandi | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hira in Assam | 3,295 | 3,159 | 959 | 2,706 | 2,550 | 942 |

Source: Census of India, Assam : 1991 and 2001

Table 12:

Percentage Age Distribution of the Hira as compared to SCs in Assam

| Community | Age | 1991 | | | 2001 | | |
|-----------|----------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| | | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| Hira | 0-6 | 18.6 | 18.5 | 18.7 | 14.8 | 14.7 | 15.0 |
| | 7-19 | 30.2 | 29.4 | 31.1 | 48.5 | 47.9 | 49.0 |
| | 20-59 | 44.7 | 45.5 | 43.8 | 30.7 | 31.6 | 29.8 |
| | 60 + | 5.6 | 5.7 | 5.4 | 5.9 | 5.7 | 6.2 |
| | Age not stated | 0.9 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.04 |
| | Total | 100.0 | 100.1 | 99.9 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| SCs | 0-6 | 19.7 | 19.2 | 20.2 | 16.0 | 15.8 | 16.2 |
| | 7-19 | 29.8 | 29.3 | 30.4 | 31.2 | 31.3 | 31.2 |
| | 20-59 | 43.5 | 44.2 | 42.8 | 46.2 | 46.6 | 45.8 |
| | 60 + | 6.2 | 6.5 | 5.9 | 6.4 | 6.2 | 6.7 |
| | Age not stated | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| | Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.1 | 99.9 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source : Derived from Table 13

Table 13 : Age-wise Size of Population of Hira as compared to SCs in Assam

| Community | Age | 1991 | | | 2001 | | |
|-----------|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| | | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| Hira | 0-6 | 9,182 | 4,674 | 4,508 | 8,182 | 4,119 | 4,063 |
| | 7-19 | 14,915 | 7,414 | 7,501 | 26,705 | 13,434 | 13,271 |
| | 20-59 | 22,031 | 11,482 | 10,549 | 16,908 | 8,853 | 8,055 |
| | 60 + | 2,746 | 1,439 | 1,307 | 3,275 | 1,601 | 1,674 |
| | Age not stated | 462 | 240 | 222 | 36 | 24 | 12 |
| | Total | 49,336 | 25,249 | 24,087 | 55,106 | 28,031 | 27,075 |
| SCs | 0-6 | 3,26,413 | 1,65,825 | 1,60,588 | 2,92,461 | 1,49,268 | 1,43,193 |
| | 7-19 | 4,94,712 | 2,53,389 | 2,41,323 | 5,70,226 | 2,95,027 | 2,75,199 |
| | 20-59 | 7,22,394 | 3,82,253 | 3,40,141 | 8,44,206 | 4,39,818 | 4,04,388 |
| | 60 + | 1,02,637 | 55,871 | 46,766 | 1,17,452 | 58,672 | 58,780 |
| | Age not stated | 13,256 | 7,279 | 5,977 | 1,604 | 889 | 715 |
| | Total | 16,59,412 | 8,64,617 | 7,94,795 | 18,25,949 | 9,43,674 | 8,82,275 |

Table 14
Rural-urban Composition of the Hira against Scheduled Castes in Assam

| Communities | Years | Rural | Urban | Rural-urban ratio |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------|
| Hira | 1961 | 94.0 | 6.0 | 15.7 |
| | 1971 | 94.2 | 5.8 | 16.2 |
| | 1991 | 89.3 | 10.7 | 8.3 |
| | 2001 | 88.3 | 11.7 | 7.5 |
| S.C. Population | 1961 | 91.7 | 8.3 | 11.0 |
| | 1971 | 90.6 | 9.4 | 9.6 |
| | 1991 | 86.2 | 13.8 | 6.2 |
| | 2001 | 85.1 | 14.9 | 5.7 |

Source: Statistical Handbook, Census of India, Assam, 1971,1991 & 2001

Table 15
District-wise Rural-urban Composition of the Hira: 1991 and 2001

| Districts | 1991 | | 2001 | |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
| 1.Kokrajhar | 66.3 | 33.7 | 58.8 | 41.2 |
| 2. Dhubri | 16.8 | 83.1 | 41.1 | 58.9 |
| 3. Goalpara | 79.9 | 20.1 | 84.1 | 15.9 |
| 4. Bongaigaon | 88.1 | 11.9 | 85.9 | 14.1 |
| 5. Barpeta | 85.6 | 14.4 | 77.6 | 22.4 |
| 6. Kamrup | 84.8 | 15.2 | 80.6 | 19.4 |
| 7. Nalbari | 99.3 | 0.7 | 99.2 | 0.8 |
| 8. Darrang | 97.6 | 2.4 | 97.6 | 2.4 |
| 9. Marigaon | 91.2 | 8.8 | 91.3 | 8.7 |
| 10. Nagaon | 98.5 | 1.5 | 96.9 | 3.1 |
| 11. Sonitpur | 90.4 | 9.6 | 93.0 | 7.0 |
| 12. Lakhimpur | 85.9 | 14.1 | 78.1 | 21.9 |
| 13. Dhemaji | 96.6 | 3.4 | 98.1 | 1.9 |
| 14. Tinsukia | 97.8 | 2.2 | 47.0 | 53.0 |
| 15.Dibrugarh | 72.0 | 28.0 | 16.4 | 83.6 |
| 16. Sibsagar | 92.2 | 7.8 | 87.8 | 12.2 |
| 17. Jorhat | 57.9 | 42.1 | 38.6 | 61.4 |
| 18. Golaghat | 80.6 | 19.4 | 82.4 | 17.6 |
| 19.Karbi Anglong | 86.3 | 13.7 | 89.1 | 10.9 |
| 20. N.C. Hills | 83.3 | 16.7 | 34.5 | 65.5 |
| 21. Cachar | 87.9 | 12.1 | 94.8 | 5.2 |
| 22. Karimganj | 75.8 | 24.2 | 79.5 | 20.5 |
| 23. Hailakandi | 100.0 | 0 | 100.0 | 0 |
| Total | 89.3 | 10.7 | 88.3 | 11.7 |

Source: Derived from Table 4.5

Table 16
Growth of Education of the SCs ,Hira and General People in Assam

| Assam | | | | | | India | | | |
|-------|------|---------|----------------|------|---------|-------|---------|----------------|---------|
| SC | Hira | General | Percent points | | | SC | General | Percent points | |
| | | | S.Cs | Hira | General | | | SC | General |
| 24.4 | 24.7 | 33.0 | - | - | - | 10.3 | 28.3 | - | - |
| 25.8 | 27.4 | 34.6 | 1.6 | 2.7 | 0.8 | 14.7 | 34.5 | 4.4 | 6.2 |
| 53.9 | 59.1 | 52.9 | 28.1 | 31.7 | 18.3 | 37.4 | 52.2 | 22.7 | 17.7 |
| 66.8 | 72.5 | 63.3 | 12.9 | 13.4 | 10.4 | 54.7 | 65.4 | 17.3 | 13.2 |

Source: Census Reports (1961-2001), Registrar General of India and All People of Assam and India

Table 17
Decadal Growth Rate in Literacy Rate of the Scheduled Castes in
and All people in Assam ,1971 and 2001

| Year | Decadal growth rate in literacy in terms of percentage points | | | | | |
|-----------|---|--------|------|--------|------|--------|
| | S.C | | All | | Hira | |
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 1961-1971 | -2.8 | -0.4 | -1.3 | -3.7 | - | - |
| 1971-1991 | 28.9 | 27.9 | 18.9 | 20.7 | 32.0 | 31.7 |
| 1991-2001 | 11.8 | 14.1 | 9.4 | 11.6 | 12.0 | 14.8 |

Source : Derived from Table 4.18

Table 18
Disparity Index ,Gender gap in Literacy Rate of the Hiras , Scheduled Castes
and All people in Assam ,1961-2001

| Year | Community | Male | Female | Disparity Index | Gender gap (Male-female gap in literacy rate) | Percentage increase (-) or decrease (+) |
|------|-----------|------|--------|-----------------|--|---|
| 1961 | S.C | 37.8 | 16.1 | 42.6 | 21.7 | - |
| 1971 | | 35.0 | 15.7 | 44.9 | 19.3 | 2.4 |
| 1991 | | 63.9 | 43.0 | 67.3 | 20.9 | -1.6 |
| 2001 | | 75.7 | 57.1 | 75.4 | 18.6 | 2.3 |
| Year | All | Male | Female | | Gender gap | Percentage increase or decrease |
| 1961 | | 44.3 | 18.6 | 42.0 | 25.7 | - |
| 1971 | | 43.0 | 22.3 | 51.9 | 20.7 | 5 |
| 1991 | | 61.9 | 43.0 | 69.5 | 18.9 | 1.8 |
| 2001 | | 71.3 | 54.6 | 76.6 | 16.7 | 2.2 |
| Year | Hira | Male | Female | | Gender gap | Percentage increase or decrease |
| 1961 | | - | - | - | - | - |
| 1971 | | 38.7 | 15.3 | 39.5 | 23.4 | - |
| 1991 | | 70.7 | 47.0 | 66.5 | 23.7 | -0.3 |
| 2001 | | 82.7 | 61.8 | 74.7 | 20.9 | 2.8 |

- Note: 1. Gender gap in terms of percentage points is calculated as difference between the percentage of male and female literacy rate.
2. The percentage increase or decrease of literacy rate in gender gap is calculated as difference between the gender gap of earlier census to the later census.

Table 19::Sex-wise Disparity and Gap in Rural-Urban Literacy Rate of the Hiras Against the Scheduled Castes in Assam ,1971,1991 and 2001

| Community | Hira | | | Scheduled Castes | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|------|------------------|------|------|
| | 1971 | 1991 | 2001 | 1971 | 1991 | 2001 |
| Rural | 26.6 | 57.7 | 71.3 | 24.5 | 52.0 | 64.9 |
| Male | 38.1 | 69.7 | 82.0 | 33.7 | 62.2 | 74.2 |
| Female | 14.4 | 45.1 | 60.1 | 14.5 | 43.0 | 54.9 |
| Disparity Index | 37.8 | 64.7 | 73.3 | 43.0 | 69.1 | 74.0 |
| Gander gap (Male-Female) | 23.7 | 24.6 | 21.9 | 19.2 | 21.5 | 19.3 |
| Percent points (rural) | - | 31.1 | 13.6 | - | 27.5 | 12.9 |
| Urban | 40.6 | 76.0 | 81.3 | 38.3 | 65.7 | 76.9 |
| Male | 49.0 | 78.5 | 88.4 | 47.2 | 73.7 | 84.1 |
| Female | 30.8 | 62.1 | 73.9 | 28.1 | 56.7 | 69.1 |
| Disparity Index | 62.9 | 79.1 | 83.6 | 59.5 | 76.9 | 82.2 |
| Gander gap (Male-Female) | - | 16.4 | 14.5 | 19. | 17.0 | 15.0 |
| Percent points (urban) | 18.2- | 35.4 | 5.3 | - | 27.4 | 11.2 |
| Rural-Urban Difference | | | | | | |
| Persons | 14.0 | 18.3 | 10.0 | 13.8 | 13.7 | 12.0 |
| Male | 10.9 | 8.8 | 6.4 | 13.5 | 11.5 | 9.9 |
| Female | 16.4 | 17.0 | 13.8 | 13.6 | 13.7 | 14.2 |

Source : Censuses of India :1991 and 2001

Table 20 Percentage Distribution of Educational Level of the Hira against the SCs :1991& 2001

| Educational level | 1991 | | | | 2001 | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Scheduled Castes | | Hira | | Scheduled Castes | | Hira | |
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| Literate without educational level | | | | | | | | |
| (a)Non-formal | 8195 | 1.1 | 251 | 1.1 | 18,662 | 1.8 | 560 | 1.6 |
| (b)Formal or below primary | 185522 | 25.8 | 5,706 | 24.0 | 361,999 | 35.4 | 10,773 | 31.7 |
| Primary | 246695 | 34.3 | 7,679 | 32.3 | 266,818 | 26.1 | 8,112 | 23.9 |
| Middle | 186589 | 26.0 | 6,803 | 28.7 | 182,924 | 17.9 | 6,958 | 20.5 |
| Matric/Secondary | 59797 | 8.3 | 2,225 | 9.4 | 130,448 | 12.7 | 5,169 | 15.2 |
| Higher Secondary/P.U | 18218 | 2.5 | 617 | 2.6 | 36,782 | 3.6 | 1,527 | 4.5 |
| Non-technical diploma | 172 | 0.02 | 6 | 0.03 | 54 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 |
| Technical diploma | 943 | 0.13 | 24 | 0.1 | 918 | 0.1 | 38 | 0.1 |
| Graduate and above | 11763 | 1.6 | 361 | 1.5 | 25,313 | 2.5 | 866 | 2.5 |
| Others* | 1081 | 0.15 | 67 | 0.3 | 81 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 7,18,975 | 99.9 | 23,739 | 100.0 | 10,,23,999 | 100.1 | 34003 | 100.0 |

Source : Census of India , Assam 1991 and 2001

* Others -engineering and technology, medicine ,agriculture and dairying, veterinary teaching etc.

Table 21: Percentage Distribution of Educational Level of the Hiras by Sex:1991& 2001

| Educational level | Hira, 1991 | | | | Hira , 2001 | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| | Male | % | Female | % | Male | % | Female | % |
| Literate without educational level | | | | | | | | |
| (a)Non-formal | 140 | 1.0 | 111 | 1.2 | 316 | 1.6 | 244 | 1.7 |
| (b)Formal or below primary | 3,196 | 22.0 | 2,510 | 27.3 | 5,966 | 30.2 | 4,807 | 33.8 |
| Primary | 4,697 | 32.3 | 2,982 | 32.4 | 4,700 | 23.8 | 3,412 | 24.0 |
| Middle | 4,171 | 28.7 | 2,632 | 28.6 | 3,897 | 19.7 | 3,061 | 21.5 |
| Matric/Secondary | 1,517 | 10.4 | 708 | 7.7 | 3,208 | 16.2 | 1,961 | 13.8 |
| Higher Secondary/P.U | 456 | 3.1 | 161 | 1.8 | 1,031 | 5.2 | 496 | 3.5 |
| Non-technical diploma | 4 | 0.03 | 2 | 0.02 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Technical diploma | 19 | 0.1 | 5 | 1.1 | 32 | 0.2 | 6 | 0.04 |
| Graduate and above | 288 | 2.0 | 73 | 0.8 | 632 | 3.2 | 234 | 1.6 |
| others | 57 | 0.4 | 10 | 0.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 14,545 | 100.0 | 9,194 | 100.0 | 19,782 | 100.0 | 14,221 | 99.9 |

Source : Census of India , Assam 1991 and 2001

Table 22 Percentage Distribution of Total, Main, Marginal Workers among the Hira and SCs

| Year | Area | Worker's categories | | | | | | | | |
|------|------|--------------------------------------|------|--------|--------------------------------------|------|--------|---|------|--------|
| | | Total Workers: % to total population | | | Main workers : % to the total worker | | | Marginal workers: % to the total worker | | |
| | | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| 1991 | SC | 29.4 | 48.4 | 8.7 | 39.3 | 40.4 | 32.8 | 5.0 | 1.0 | 9.5 |
| 2001 | - | 34.4 | 50.3 | 17.3 | 74.8 | 85.4 | 41.8 | 25.2 | 14.6 | 58.2 |
| 1991 | Hira | 31.8 | 48.0 | 14.7 | 42.2 | 38.6 | 54.6 | 2.2 | 0.4 | 11.1 |
| 2001 | - | 37.0 | 49.4 | 24.2 | 71.5 | 85.9 | 41.2 | 28.5 | 14.1 | 58.8 |

Source: Census of India, 1991, and ii. Census of India, Assam, 2001

Table 23

Percentage Distribution of Main Workers of SCs and the Hira in Assam, 2001

| Category of workers | Scheduled Castes | | | Hira | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Person | Male | Female | Person | Male | Female |
| 1.Cultivators | 32.7 | 33.1 | 30.5 | 36.2 | 38.8 | 24.9 |
| 2.Agricultural labourers | 8.1 | 7.9 | 9.3 | 5.9 | 5.7 | 7.0 |
| 3.Household industry workers | 5.1 | 3.8 | 12.8 | 14.2 | 7.8 | 42.4 |
| 4. Others workers | 54.1 | 55.1 | 47.4 | 43.6 | 47.7 | 25.7 |
| Main workers | 100.0 | 99.9 | 100.0 | 99.9 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source : Census Report 2001

Table 24

Percentage Distribution of the Hira and SCs by Religion : 2001

| Religion | SCs | % | Hira | % |
|---------------|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1. Hindus | 1824472 | 99.9 | 55,097 | 99.9 |
| 2. Sikhs | 822 | 0.05 | 3 | 0.01 |
| 3. Buddhists | 655 | 0.04 | 6 | 0.01 |
| All religions | 1825949 | 100.0 | 55,106 | 100.0 |

Source: Census Report 2001

Table 25:Percentage Distribution of Population by Marital Status:2001

| Castes | Marital status | Person | | Male | | Female | |
|--------|----------------------|-----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| | | T | % | T | % | T | % |
| Hira | Never married | 30,162 | 54.7 | 16,777 | 59.9 | 13,385 | 49.4 |
| | Currently married | 22,080 | 40.1 | 10,788 | 38.5 | 11,292 | 41.7 |
| | Widowed | 2,590 | 4.7 | 412 | 1.5 | 2,178 | 8.0 |
| | Divorced / separated | 274 | 0.5 | 54 | 0.2 | 220 | 0.8 |
| | Total | 55,106 | 100.0 | 28,031 | 100.1 | 27,075 | 99.9 |
| SCs | Never married | 1,009,672 | 55.3 | 569,604 | 60.4 | 440,068 | 49.9 |
| | Currently married | 723,630 | 39.6 | 357,497 | 37.9 | 366,133 | 41.5 |
| | Widowed | 86,072 | 4.7 | 14,889 | 1.6 | 71,183 | 8.1 |
| | Divorced / separated | 6,575 | 0.4 | 1,684 | 0.2 | 4,891 | 0.6 |
| | Total | 18,25,949 | 100.0 | 9,43,674 | 100.0 | 8,82,275 | 100.0 |

Source: Census of India, 2001