

Chapter 4

STRUCTURAL PATTERNS OF THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATION

This chapter examines structural variables like caste, class, gender, religion, age, income, occupation, landholding and community in relation to agricultural communication. An Indian village is a group of interacting individuals who are differentiated further into different sub-groups based on caste, religion, class and occupation, living and working together in a well defined area, with socio economic interdependence and intergraded by common beliefs and values. The features among the village communities are a stable population; number of shared values and recognition of individual identity. Although a village community is more homogenous in many of their social and psychological traits than an urban community, yet it is highly stratified with extreme differences of status among different groups (Gaikwad et al. (1973). Assam is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. Different castes communities, ethnic groups and tribes make it up. The entire structure of the society is related to the environment that they have. As the main source of livelihood is agriculture, the pattern of communication is also shaped or happened through socio-structural variants.

Caste as Communication Channel

The caste is an important criterion of social status differentiations among the village communities. As observe by Dube (1969), “Caste is perhaps the most important single organization principle in these communities and governs to a considerable degree the organization of kinship and territorial units. Within a village, caste system manifests itself as a vertical structure in which individual castes are hierarchically graded, kept permanently apart and at the same time, linked together by some well defined expectations and obligation which integrate them into a village social system.”

Caste forms one of the basic structural elements in the economic as well as social interactions in the villages. According to Risley, ‘A caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name which usually denotes or is associated with specific occupation claiming common descent from a

mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same professional calling and are regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming single and homogenous community.’ Further, it also provides a way of life to its members and hence can be considered as a structural category for understanding the communication process of the village. In other words caste can be considered as a medium of communication. It is with this perspective we view caste and its role in the agricultural communication system. The following table shows caste distribution among the four villages:

Table 4.1
Caste among Families in the Villages
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Caste	Charal	Bhuyan	Lahdoigarh	Borbahoni	Total
General	--	48(92.31)	--	09 (8.91)	57 (17.64)
OBCs	03(5.45)	04(7.69)	--	14(13.86)	21(6.51)
MOBCs	--	--	--	77 (77.23)	77(23.84)
STs	--	--	113(98.27)	--	113(34.98)
SCs	52(94.55)	--	02 (1.73)	1(0.30)	55(17.03)
Total	55 (100)	52 (100)	115(100)	101 (100)	323 (100)

Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

The table shows that majority of the families (34.98%) belong to Scheduled Tribe group and about one fourth (23.84%) belong to Most Other Backward Classes (MOBC), nearly one fifth (17.03%) belong to Scheduled Castes, nearabout one fifth (17.64%) belong to general castes category and 65% belong Other Backward Classes in the villages.

In Borbahoni village, nearly four fifths (77.23%) of the families are from Most Other Backward Classes followed by Other Backward Castes (13.86%), General castes (8.91%) and Scheduled Castes (0.30%). Most (98.27%) of scheduled tribe people are found in Lahdoigarh and a few (1.73%) of them are scheduled castes. In Bhuyan village, most of them (92.31%) are General Caste people and only 7.69% belong to Other Backward Classes while in Charal, most of the families are from Schedule Castes (94.55%) and 5.45% belong to Other Backward Classes.

Thus, among four villages, scheduled tribe families are found more than non-tribe families while four caste categories are found in Borbahoni only.

Numerical Dominance and Communications with Outsiders

In terms of numerical dominance every village has one or two Jatis whose presence is felt in economic, political, socio- religious and other spheres in its life. Although in villages of Assam there is no experience of dominant caste as it is found in different places in India, yet some villages have the same caste and community which together makes broad cultural communication.

In all the four villages people firstly communicate with their caste fellows, neighbours and relatives. In Borbahoni village, majority of the families are from Most Other Backward Classes. Therefore, any information they get from outsiders are definitely disseminated within their caste members, followed by neighbour or to neighbouring families of other caste. Their frequent interactions are not only due to their typical socio-economic and political status but also primarily due to their numbers. Thus, in the village life due to their numerical dominance the probability of their interaction and exchange of information, especially at various gossip centres, is high.

In Borbahoni village, in terms of numerical dominance, Oriya is the people who come across frequently in all spheres of the village life. So, in any occasion such as marriage, birth, festival, exchange of goods and other occasions there is relatively more social interaction among the members of particular group within and outside the family/village. Likewise, in Bhuyan village also, the communication firstly happens through intra-caste within neighbouring families through different castes as well as religious functions.

Public places like market, grocery shop, Namghar (temple), card playing places are important for agricultural discussions. They are centres of communication from where the information spreads to other people. Almost all sorts of information-recreational (jokes), religious prediction, political news, agricultural activities and festivals- are matter of discussion. These gossip centres help to get new information about the outside world.

There is more intra-interaction among the castes of the particular category because of ritual norms of purity and pollution. However, secular places like shops and other places help inter-group interaction.

Exchange of Goods and Communication in the Four Villages

Exchange of goods among village people mostly happens through their own communities. There is found among eight different communities; namely Ahom, Hira, Kalita, Mishing, Oriya, Nepali, Muslim and Bengali in the four villages. The following table shows the distribution of community in the villages:

Table 4.2
Communities in the Villages
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Community	Charal	Bhuyan	Lahdoigarh	Borbahoni	Total
Ahom	03(5.45)	04 (7.69)	--	14(13.86)	21(6.51)
Hira	52(94.55)	--	--	--	52(16.09)
Kalita	--	48 (92.31)	--	--	48(14.87)
Mishing	--	--	113(98.26)	--	113(34.99)
Oriya	--	--	02(1.74)	78(77.22)	80(24.77)
Nepali	--	--	--	01(.99)	01(0.30)
Muslim	--	--	--	03(2.97)	03(0.93)
Bengali	--	--	--	05(4.96)	05(1.54)
Total	55 (100)	52(100)	115(100)	101(100)	323(100)

Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

The table shows that more than one third (34.99%) of the total population belong to the Mishing community followed by Oriya (24.77%) and Hira (16.09%). The other communities like Kalita (14.87%), Ahom (6.51%), Nepali (0.30%), Muslim (0.93%) and Bengali (1.54%) are very less in number.

There is interaction across the community and class lines and hence, it brings about inter-caste/community communication. Inter-caste communication in Bhuyan village is relatively lower than other three villages because Kalita people think themselves as higher than above mentioned communities. This type of restriction is seen only in food habits. The senior-most people of any communities like Ahom, Kalita are generally hesitate to take meal with the people of other communities. And it is more restricted to those who are devoted as *Bhakat, Puruhit, Namgharia, Medhi* etc.

In many aspects the upper caste people take helps from other caste people like traditional treatment in case of stomach diseases, fracture or muscular pain etc. But, again, communication with lower caste or community people is happening mostly through agricultural activities.

Some of the low caste youths of the Oriya community from the nearest village are employed as *halua* or annual servant. This annual servant lives, eats and sleeps in the house of other caste people. He almost becomes a member of the family in which he works. The servant is an annual contract labourer. The communication between them is a master -servant relationship. The *halua* on the instruction of his master mixes the various pesticides in appropriate proportions and sprays mixture on crops, applies chemical fertilizers of various types, waters the crops, works and manages all other daily wage labours because he is obliged to his master who has helped him financially during his difficult times. Marriage of sister or daughter, festival, construction of house and medical expenses are some of the reasons why a person decides to work as an annual labourer.

Though in some regions like Coorg in south India it takes the form of slavery, yet in North-East India it is largely an economic contract which many a times comes to his rescue during social and economic crises. It also socializes and exposes him to various news and new ideas, techniques and knowledge in agriculture, health, hygiene, animal husbandry, poultry, urban attitudes, new values and things. So, the system of *halua* is an instance of inter-caste, inter-class and inter-personal communication.

Thus, communication within and outside of their own caste happens in the four villages. In Borbahoni, inter-caste communication is higher than rest of the three villages as it has different caste and communities.

Traditional Village Headman as Channel of Communication

The existence of traditional village headman is still seen in the villages and they are respected in many aspects. As far as the communication pattern is concerned the Sadhu traditional village headman's role is crucial. In every sphere of village activities like collection of land revenue, settlement of dispute, collection of religious donation and protection of their people from outside invasion are in the hand of headman. The head- man continues to enjoy status and power in religious, social and political life of the village. In various rituals and activities of village festivals such as Bihu, Porag and Pujas he is duly respected. The Ahom community people especially newly married couples give *Gamusa* (white towel with red fabricating flower) and liquor, meat and beetal nut as a gift.

Communication through traditional headman is seen more in Lahdoigarh village. In a kind of discussion like religious, agricultural, festivals or dispute the headman is crucial in the village. The power is executed through meeting known as Kebang (Gaon Sabha).

In Charal also, these types of meetings are held when the villagers organise Bhauna, Bihu, Bhagawat or Kirtana Paath. With the help of senior villagers who may be Namgharia, Madhi and Sadhu a meeting is called to take decision by analyzing Assamese calendar. In other villages, i.e., Bhuyan and Borbahoni the same role of headman is seen on such occasions. Any development programme starts in the presence of headman in all the four villages.

The modern and secular activities of elections and development programmes are undertaken with the formal consent and approval of the headman. Disputes and quarrels pertaining to land and family are still resolved by him. His work is final and no one generally approaches a court of law. This type of 'unidirectional' pattern of communication is there which removes the hindrance of fraction ridden of the village. However, due to rise of mandal panchayat, the president of panchayat and secretary of Village Defense Party (VDP) have come into power which is a challenge to traditional authority and ideology. Except, religious matter villagers approached to VDP official to settle down any decisions.

Thus, the role of traditional headman is still stronger in Lahdoigarh than rest of three villages it because of less impact of modern education, strong religious beliefs, unity among the villagers etc.

The Village Announcer and Communication

In a word there is no permanent village announcer in the four villages. Any new information - religious, agricultural, visit of officials and other- comes to be known through different gossip centres and in religious temple. It can be said that the role of announcer is played by the *Gaonburha*.

Thus, caste is found important channels of communication in the four villages. As for example in Borbahoni most of the families are MOBC categories where any information flows through this category. The information provider (relatives or officials) also sees to communicate through their own caste people. Castewise

communication have also seen in forms of exchange of goods in various occasions such as tilling, transplanting, exchange of seeds etc.

Traditional Agricultural Communication

A system of cooperation that exists in a village is called *Na-bhui*. It happens at the time of transplanting of seeds. The villagers, friends or relatives help by offering reciprocal cooperation and implements, seeds, human labour, bullocks etc. Kinship also draws agricultural families together for mutual help. Consequently, there is exchange of knowledge in agriculture and innovations –hybrid seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and implements. The agriculture-related activities like *Na-khua* are also a way of communication among villagers which implies cooking of the newly harvested crop like rice.

Communication through *Na-bhui*, have seen specially at the time of late tilling where the farmers get helped from neighbouring villages, friends, relatives etc. which is mostly seen in Lahdoigarh and Borbahoni. This is only because of the farmer families used more traditional ploughing implements than power tiller, tractors etc. But, communication at the time of seed transplanting happens equally in all the four villages.

Thus, communication through traditional customs has seen in all the four villages where much more in Lahdoigarh and Borbahoni.

Religious Communication as Channel

Rituals, Priests and Communication

Religion is an important variable to understand the structural pattern of rural society. Religion indicates the people's beliefs, practices and way of social life. Durkheim (1922) in his book "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" has defined that "Religion is a system of belief and rituals with reference to sacred which binds people together into social group". The function of religious rituals is to affirm the moral superiority of the society over its individual members and thus to maintain the solidarity of society.

The ritual priests of the respective castes interact with certain jatis and influence their attitudes, customs and practices and help finding auspicious days and

timings for commencement of agriculture, occupational, domestic and socio-religious activities like finding a bride or bride-groom, performing naming ceremony of a child, buying domestic or agricultural appliances, auspicious day for entry into a new house etc. The priests and the villagers depend more on religious calendar before taking any decision, actions and socio-religious and economic activities.

Besides, they disseminate religious ideas; they pass on ideology, philosophical and religious concepts of *karma*, *dharm*, *Artha*, *mukshya*, *papa* and *punya* etc. When a villager violates the rule of caste and is not observing the purity and pollution principle then they immediately take action against him and penalize him.

Table 4.3
Religious Groups among Families in the Villages
(Percentage in parentheses)

Religious Group	Charal	Bhuyan	Lahdoigarh	Borbahoni	Total
Hindu	55(100)	52(100)	115(100)	98(97.03)	320(99.07)
Muslim	--	--	--	03(2.97)	03(0.93)
Total	55(100)	52(100)	115(100)	101(100)	323(100)

Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

The table shows that most of them (99.07%) are Hindu and a few families are Muslim. The Muslims are found only in Borbahoni.

More religious communication happens on a *Habah* or death ceremony of a person. A priest has a leading role to perform from the beginning to the end in the ceremony. In the Assamese society the villagers as well as the family of the dead person have different rules to observe for the period of minimum six months. From the date of the death, the family and the relatives are restricted to take food for three days and also restricted to use oil in food for ten days. The third day ceremony is known as *Tilani* (in Assamese *tini* means three); in ten days it is *Doha* (Doh means ten) and finally *Habah* is performed by the villagers. All these rituals are actively performed by the priest. On the day of the ceremony by taking blessing from the priest the villager cut the hairs of the sons of the dead. The family of the dead makes a temporary stage with the help of bamboo and tin roof. *Bhakats* (Sadhus) are invited by the family from different places to make them *Suddhi* (purify) through the ceremony of *Habah*. The *bayan parties* (a group of reciters with instrument in religious activities) sing traditional religious songs with an attractive manner and the other people enjoy it by heart. So, in every religious activity the priest has an

important role in communication with the villagers as well as outsiders by giving different instructions in the village. Generally, an important communication happens among the aged people specially in agriculture from where the young generation also takes part by informing new information which they get from town.

Although there is a tradition of astrological calculation of religious predictions among Assamese people but there is no such type of tradition in all the four villages. According to the Assamese calendar they predict about the future production of crops, flood, and other natural activities related to the villagers. The naming of a child is done on the basis of astrological power of the deities of same caste religious astronomer. After thirty days of a child birth there is ceremony festival; namely, *Suddhi* (purity) where traditional priests perform major role in the villages.

They also perform the activities in the name of forefathers to satisfy them and to save the family from any evil-eye. The ritual specialist also takes an important part in the preliminary examination of a would-be-bride. The priest discusses with her on different matters to know whether she is able to cook food, making traditional shawl, knowledge about agricultural activities. He also examines the physical fitness and behaviour of the girl.

Thus, rituals are sources as well as ways of agricultural communication where religious priest takes an important role. These patterns of communication are found in all the four villages.

Village Deities and Religious Communication

There is no practice of village deities in all four villages but some families individually practice it by sacrificing red cock or goat. Sometimes, the villagers practice the '*Bhekuli-Biya*' ceremony when there is no rainfall for a long time in village or locality. Besides, the villagers of Lahdoigarh practices Doni, Polo puja to protect them from evil eyes. This puja is related to Sun and Moon which they believe as their forefather. Some of the families which have no children for a long time perform rituals to satisfy the deities, and when they get children they sell the child orally to one of their neighbour's families which again returns the child after a year in a religious ceremony organised for it. This religious activity is still prevailing in the villages. But it depends on families' own willingness and there is no compulsion.

Thus, through these deities villagers communicate within and outside the village.

Religious Oracles, Tours and Communication

Although not the whole village visits the religious places but some community people have habit to visit at least once in a year if possible. As majority of villagers are Hindu they visit the Hindu temple or Namghar like *Dhekia-khua* Namghar (Jorhat), *Bottadua* (Borpeta) and *Aathkhelia* Namghar (Golaghat), *Jagannath temple* (Puri) for religious purposes. Generally villagers visit the Namghar in the month of *Bhado* (August) because the Assamese people (*Vashnavites*) consider it a sacred month. Generally women of the village with the help of youths collect money per head and hire a vehicle from town. They start journey without taking food till taking *sewa* (bless) from the priest in the *namghar*. They offer some gifts like money, *gamusa*, *sarai* etc. to the Namghar. Before returning they make purchasing of some pictures of gods like *Rama*, *Krishna* and *Shiva*. So, it symbolizes the villagers' interactions with outside places and people through which they get new information and introduce new culture.

Thus, these religious tours, oracles have great impact on social life of the villagers which further helps to agricultural communication in the four villages. Some economically sound families visit these places by their own vehicles.

Naming Pattern of Deities/ Gods/ Goddesses

Naming pattern of a child in the name of a god and goddess is no more in the village in present time. But few decades ago it was deeply rooted in the minds of the villagers. So, some villagers' names end with the words like *ishwar* that's God Padmeswar, Moneswar Chandeswar etc which denote their belief in the God. Some of the villagers' names are like *Aghuna* (who is born in month of October), *Bhadia* (who is born in the month of *Bhado* (August) according to the calculation of Assamese calendar.

The families of Ahom, Bhuyan and Hira communities practice *Saraidiya or Aai Sakam* ceremony to protect families from diseases like small pox, chicken pox etc., especially in the month of Bohag-Jeth (April/May) in every year. Besides for the satisfaction of forefathers every householder of Ahom performs a religious ceremony

Salitalagua or Baserekia. All the villagers (generally aged person known as *Bhakat*) are invited by the head of family. He gives them all the necessary goods and directs to cook some items by him with a *gio* (a chicken). Generally, they eat only *Sabji* with *Haaj* (a kind of wine made from rice; especially among Ahom and Mishing communities) on pieces of banana leaves. Before doing it they recite mantras from *Bhagawat* to rescue the family from evils. Besides, every year on *Purnima* of *Puh* month (December) the villagers arrange a feast with due respect to the *Lakhimpuria* Guru. While dining they discuss the *Dharma-Shasta*, their ideology, philosophical importance, etc. They also discuss about agriculture, production or diseases of tea leaves etc.

So, this type of inter-personal communication is common among the villagers in religious ceremonies.

Village Communication

Rearing of cow, pigs, hens and duck at the family level is a common scene among the villagers. Many economically sound families hand over goats and pigs to low caste people for rearing. After one or two years when they grow up and mature they sell them in the market and profit is shared fifty-fifty. Next time the lower group families buy these out of their own money. Some low caste women come to the village with medium quality of tea packet, and they exchange these for rice or other essential goods. Besides this, interpersonal communication is also seen during the grinding of paddy in *Dheki* (traditional thrashing machine). If she is helped by others, she has to help others in their emergency, especially during the time of Bihu festival. Thus, mutual help and interpersonal communication between the castes exist.

A social function arranged when a girl attains puberty is called *Santi or tuloni* which further enables the dissemination of this news in the whole village. Such communication through social functions takes place in the communities of Ahom, Bhuyan, Hira, etc. but the Ahom enjoy through rites and rituals than others. Women of one's own caste and locality are invited to take part in the ceremony. For the period of four days she cooks her food herself with her new utensils. On the day of ceremony, she is bathed in a temporary bathroom (made from banana tree and bamboo) by the local women. Then they carry her to the *Robhatali* or *Penndel* and make her up by new dress and ornament. The local women by singing and

entertaining the girl also socialize her with emotions, feelings, rights and duties of an ideal woman. The relatives, neighbours and other well-wishers also come to the ceremony with gift for the girl. Thus, communication of social, moral and religious themes take place here. Thus the following table discusses the Pujas as a means of communications.

Pujas and Communications

Puja (worship) is part and parcel of Hindu society. The Hindu people are performing different pujas in different time to satisfy their gods and goddesses for welfare of the family. The following table shows the distribution.

Table 4.4
Performance of Pujas among Families of the Villages
(Percentages in Parentheses)

Name of Pujas	Charal	Bhuyan	Lahdoigarh	Borbahoni	Total N=323
	N=55	N=52	N=115	N=101	
Karam	--	--	--	84(83.16)	84(26.00)
Tusu	--	--	--	84(83.16)	84(26.00)
Kali	--	--	--	89(88.11)	89(27.55)
Lakshmi	55(100)	52(100)	115(100)	98(97.02)	320(99.07)
Saraswati	55 (100)	52(100)	115(100)	25(24.75)	247(76.47)
Viswakarma	35(63.63)	52(100)	20(17.39)	16(15.84)	123(38.08)

Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

The table reveals that the pujas like Karam, Tusu and Kali pujas are generally performed by tea garden labourers. That is why these are found only in Borbahoni village. 99.07% of families perform Lakshmi, followed by Saraswati (76.47%), Vishwakarma (38.08%), Kali (27.55%), 26%, each, Tusu and Karam puja. In Borahoni, 97.02% perform Lakshmi puja, 88.11% Kali, 24.75% Saraswati, 15.84% Vishwakarma and 83.16% Karam and Tusu pujas in the village. It is noticed that variance of performing puja is only Vishwakarma which is performed by 17.39% families in Lahdoigarh and 63.63% of families in Charal village.

Saraswati puja is especially performed by those families which have students; they perform it every year by offering *Payas* (Bhug in Assamese) with *Prashad* (a mixture of Banana, coconut, Sana, laddu or sweets) to the neighbours or to the students which is said as *Prarthana* (prayer seeking blessing from Saraswati Devi). Vishwakarma Puja is another important puja performed in the villages along with the Hindus of India. Generally, the families which have motor vehicles and machinery

practice it with pomp and gaiety. They arrange a *Nama kirtan* with the help of a religious priest for proper functioning of their instruments.

These pujas always help the villagers to communicate with neighbours, friends, relatives or outsiders. This communication or information is helpful through their performances or practices at different times. The following table shows the festivals that the villagers celebrate:

Festivals and Communication

Table 4.5
Festivals Celebrated in Families of the Villages
(Percentages in Parentheses)

Festivals	Charal	Bhuyan	Lahdoigarh	Borbahoni	Total
	N=55	N=52	N=115	N=101	N=323
Bihu	55 (100)	52 (100)	--	14(13.86)	121(37.46)
Ali-ai-Irigang	--	--	113(98.26)	--	113(34.98)
Diwali	55 (100)	52 (100)	115(100)	98(97.02)	320(99.07)
Holi	--	--	115(100)	84(83.16)	199(61.60)
New Year	55 (100)	52 (100)	115(100)	101 (100)	323(99.07)
Shiv-Ratri	55 (100)	52 (100)	115(100)	98(97.02)	320(99.07)

Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

The data show that most (99.07%) of the families celebrate the festivals such as Diwali, New Year and Shiv Ratri. Over three fifths (61.60%) celebrate Holi and 34.98% of the total celebrate Ali-ai-Irigang. All the families in Charal, Bhuyan and Lahdoigarh celebrate Bihu, Diwali, Holi and New Year. In Borbahoni, 97.02% of families celebrate Diwali and Shiv-Ratri, followed by Holi (83.16%) and Bihu (13.86%).

Thus, families enjoyed these festivals and get chances to communicate on various issues.

Bihu Festival

Bihu is one of the main festivals of the Assamese. It is not only the way of communication among people but also a way of religious and cultural maintenance among the Assamese people from generation to generation. It is the heart of the Assamese. Except the Oriya, Muslim, Bengali and Nepali communities and all others have tradition to celebrate Bihu festivals in their villages or families. But it does not mean that other community people do not enjoy it as the Assamese culture and society

are very rich with different ethnic groups and communities. Almost all people enjoy festival of other communities also. The data show those families which have Bihu tradition in their houses (37.46% of families but those of Lahdoigar).

The Bihu is mainly of three types; namely, *Bohag or Rongali*, *Maagh or Bhugali* and *Kati or Kongali*. All these festivals are related with agriculture. Bohag Bihu is celebrated at the time of cultivation. All the people of the village on the day of *Uruka* (previous day of main festival) make some kind of arrows and put slides of vegetables on that arrow. On the first day of the festival (*Goru Bihu*) all the people collect their cows and bulls and throw water and the slides of vegetables and whipp them by *Makhioti* (a kind of small tree with red leaves) branch with leaves. They prepare a food out of 101 vegetables. They believe that on the day there is no chance of food poisoning, although they use this mixture. They use different turmeric, *matimah* (a kind of bean) for bathing and after taking food the head of the family gives some gift to his (head of household) parents and they also wish him for prosperity in life. On the day of main Bihu the people of the village enjoy taking part in different competitions with eggs and later they share it with each other. The villagers, generally youths of the village, get together with different instruments like *Dhol* (drum), *taal* (plates of metal), *Bahi* (flute), *Gogona*, *Pepa* (one kind of instrument made from buffalo horn). First they go to the headman or religious priest of the village for the Bihu dance, known as *husori*. They sing different types of traditional songs and make dance of Bihua (male dancer) and Nasoni (female). But now the husori party use modern songs also from various Assamese Bihu song albums. After taking a gift (orihona, i.e., pairs of battle nut and cash) they wend up their performance and proceed to the next house. The aged persons also enjoy the Bihu by doing *Shravan-Kirtan* i.e. singing *kirtan* or *Hari naam* with the instrument like *Nagara*, *Mridong*, *Bahi* etc, They explain the stories of *Krishna-Radha* through acting of two small children as the characters of *Krishna-Radha*. These types of practices give not only entertainment but also religious, cultural as well as ideological knowledge to the people in the villages. In this way, the villagers enjoy the whole month of *Bohag* (April) and prepare for the coming season of crops. Now-a-days Husori is performed on the stage and perform it as an item of competition and the winner of the group is awarded with cash and a certificate. So such traditional forms

of communication show that they are well- integrated into modern mass media in the village.

The second important festival of the Assamese culture is *Maagh or Bhugali* Bihu, performed during the harvesting time. Bhugali means enjoyment, people fully enjoy the festival. In this festival all the people of the village collect rice and cash per head and arrange a feast. They also collect wood and those who do not have wood can offer bamboo. On the day of the festival they make a *Maji* (wooden planks raised on four posts) on an open ground or in front of village *Namghar*. They also make a *bhela-ghar* (one kind of house made by bamboo and lower portion of paddy tree) where they spend night by playing cards or by other discussion. Next morning the youth (generally children) of the village torch the *maji*. Gradually, all the person of the village comes to that place with bettle nut and other eatable goods like coconuts and bananas and distribute among the children.

The third festival is *Kaati or Kongali* Bihu and it is performed in Kati (October) month according to Assamese calendar. Every family of the village plant a plant of *tulsi* in front of their house. On the day of the festival the children of the village get together and pray in front of the *Tulsi* tree with a photo of *Lakhmi*. They pray for proper growth of the crops and safety from different evil-eye. Besides, the villagers light *Saki* (lamp made from papaya) at different places such as granary, gate post, reading room, and cultivated ground. On that day they do not eat fish.

Thus, Bihu festival is another important channel of communication found in all the four villages. The families visit to neighbours, relatives where communication happens on various issues relating from preparation of land to harvesting.

Ali-ai-Irigang

Ali-ai-legang is somehow related with Bohag Bihu practices among the Mishing people. In the middle of cultivation, in the month of October, they perform Sarag puja so that the ancestor spirits may protect the flourishing sprouts from pest and other natural calamities. Again, after the crops have been harvested, they worship Dabur. They believe that Kuber (Lakshmi) is the goddess of wealth and agriculture and so the first bundle of crops is taken to the store in her name. These types of

agricultural festival help them to share agricultural matters. Communication through this festival happens within the village system including neighbours and relatives.

New Year

All the villagers, especially the young generation enjoy the last day of December or first day in the month of January very much. Now, it has almost become tradition among all the villages in Assam as well as India. Although it is related to the festival of Christians in Assam they do not see the actual cause of the festival. They arrange a feast by collecting money from each other and make picnic to a historical or natural beautiful place. Thus, it is influenced from western culture where group communication is more possible.

Durga Puja

Durga Puja is a festival celebrated in the name of the Goddess Durga. As the Hindu worship many gods and goddesses, Durga puja is important among them. This festival shows the victory of truth and good on dreadful demon (*Akhur*). Though the villagers do not arrange it in their own villages, but they offer donation and sacrifice goat, duck, fruits etc to the puja or to Devi (*Gokhani*). The Bengali people of Borbahoni village celebrate it delightfully than other.

The festival like Durga puja helps to communicate almost all the villagers even among those villagers who do not visit regularly to town. By observation, it is found that majority of farmers of Lahdoigarh and Borbahoni communicate as well as get agricultural information from dealers, wholesalers etc. when they visit in these occasions.

Diwali

Diwali or Depandita is the festival of lights, celebrated all over India in winter season. The celebration relates with the victory of Lord Rama over the demon Ravan and the return of Rama to Ayodhya with brother Lakshman and wife Sita. The people of India enjoy it with religious traditional rules and regulation. As part of their culture, the people in all the four villages celebrate this festival. They clean their houses and decorate it with lights on the day of Diwali. They burst fire-crackers and arrange a

lucky-draw coupon on that day where prizes are given by the senior citizens of the village.

Thus, communication through Diwali happens within the village and among relatives who visits in these occasions. It happens in all the villages.

Holi

Holi is another important festival among Hindus. It is a festival of colours (*Rang*) in Borbahoni. It is also related with the Lord Krishna and his female friends (Gopis). Among the four villages only the people of Borbahoni celebrate it. Villagers enjoyed it by spraying colours to one another. This festival makes them relief as well as prepared them for next day works.

Folk Media and Socio-Religious Communication

The mythological, recreational, ideological and emotional value of the folk media has great significance in Indian society. The folk media for many generations have been the carriers of great as well as little traditions through the word-of-mouth communication. Illiteracy does not come in the way of the process of traditional communication. These folk media help communicate among villagers.

Bhauna (Theatrical Play)

Bhauna is one of the major traditional media practices in the villages. It is a kind of acting on the stories of Mahabharata and Ramayana. It is played on the stage throughout night. Both male and female characters are present. The female character is also enacted by the male person. The whole affair is managed by the youth, elders and families of the nearest villages. The other caste people also support in necessary activities.

An instant stage is erected in an open field or in front of a *Namghar* (temple) with the help of bamboo sticks, polythene roof or tin, wooden plates and carpets. Whenever electricity is available it is used for lighting the stage and for setting the microphone and loudspeakers, otherwise generator is also used to continue the programme. These traditional communications are always acted as source of information. It also shows the integration between traditional and modern media in

the rural areas. The following table shows the distribution of function attended by the villages:

Table 4.6
Participation in Religious Functions by the Villagers
(Percentages in Parentheses)

Name of Function	Charal N-55	Bhuyan N-52	Borbahoni N-101	Total N-323
Bhauna	55(100)	52(100)	14(13.86)	121(37.46)
Bhagawat	55(100)	52(100)	14(13.86)	121(37.46)
Kirtaan	55(100)	52(100)	14(13.86)	121(37.46)
Shankardeva Utsav	55(100)	52(100)	14(13.86)	121(37.46)
Janmastami	55(100)	52(100)	14(13.86)	121(37.46)
Id-Ul-Fitar	--	--	03(2.97)	3(0.92)
Moharam	--	--	03(2.97)	3(0.92)

Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

The table shows that of the total 37.46% of families have attended religious function like Bhauna, Bhagawat, Kirtaan, Shankardeva Utsav, Janmastami whereas 0.92% attends Id-ul-fitar and Mohoram. All families in Charal and Bhuyan attend these festivals whereas 13.86% of Hindu and 2.97% of Muslim families in Borbahoni attend those festivals.

Structure of the Media

The whole play includes narration pertaining to the epic or great traditions of Mahabharata or Ramayana through continuous narration in dialogue form. The *Bayan* and his party sing song with instrument like *Nagara (drum)*, *Khul*, *Taal*, *Mridong*, *Bahi (flute)* etc. There is no use of the screen and the play runs continuously.

Thus, dialogues, narrations and musical songs go on alternatively, maintaining the continuity, interest and mood of the viewers. The people sit and enjoy the play without batting the eyelids and are full of praise whenever a powerful dialogue is delivered by the characters. These types of mass communication through dialogues and songs are reaching deep into the hearts of the people by using concepts and ideologies like *karma*, *dharma*, *papa*, *punya* etc. Besides, it shows the ideal relationships between husband and wife, teacher and pupils, etc.

The *Bhauna* not only becomes a medium of entertainment but also an exponent of Hindu philosophy, religion and values. It helps communicate values,

ideals and norms of the Indian society. Krishna and Rama are worshipped and idealized. Lord Krishna even preaches that people should not be attached to worldly and elusive things like money, power, and other materials; rather, one should give importance to justice, kindness, moral and duty. The folk media strengthen the religion and socio-cultural norms and ideals. Thus, there is constant exposure of the villagers to the stories, themes and ideals of the great tradition. Thereby, these media and religious ideologies are not separate, but become a part of the villagers' religion and life. But one thing is that the villagers are gradually becoming less interested in these types of traditions yet they have great significance to maintain social control and integration among the village people. Generally these dramas are staged in the month of *puh*, according to Assamese calendar.

Due to impact of urbanization the role and function of these types of traditional media has undergone change. The modern commercial Hindi and Assamese films have attracted the rural youth. As a result, the modern social dramas and film stories are being staged in the village. This is a sign of using pattern of new technologies to respond to the taste, attitude, recreation and entertainment of the village people. The modern social dramas have been screened, and modern settings of house, lighting, musical instruments like Harmonium, tabla, guitar microphones and speakers are made.

Different new film-dramas are staged in the village which require less time and reveal the increasing importance of time, a sign of urbanization and impact of modern media of communication. At present, the television and videos have further brought attraction of visual impact. Commercial advertisements influence new tastes and values in food and fashion. Social dramas and family dramas attract the women folk. In these dramas village life is pasteurized realistically and revolves round the people like the traditional village headman, village accountant and or the middle class farmer's life. Exploitation by the rich is also depicted. The using pattern of these new technologies shows that traditional and modern media are well-integrated in the villages. The structure of traditional media and their contents change from religious to social and recreational themes.

Thus, communication through folk media has seen much more in Charal than rest of three villages. The villagers have devoted lots of labours, energy to make the

play/drama/Bhauna successful. It is also observed that every evening some *Bhakats* with youths recites *Nama* in the village Namghar (temple) in Charal specially in the month of Bhado. The villagers of Bhuyan also did same religious communication by performing *Bhauna*, *Nama Kirtana* and various pujas in their village Namghar.

Joymoti Utsav

Among the important festivals of the four villages, Joymoti is one of them. Joymoti is the wife of *Godapani* (Rudra Singha) of Ahom dynasty. Due to autocratic rule of *Lora Raja* he escaped to Naga Rajya (Nagaland). But the king caught his wife Joymoti and punished her fiercely to get her husband's whereabouts. But she was a lucretia women and she did not disclose about her husband till death. Another character of this real story is *Dalimi*. She was a simple girl and from Naga community. When Godapani is in the Naga Rajya (Nagaland) she fell in love with him and she secured his life at different times. At last he came back and conquered *Lora Raja*. This is the summary of the story. This story is performed by the villagers of Borbahoni mainly with the help of youth girls. They make a committee and fix a date and start collection of money from nearby villages and road collection. Every evening they rehearse with the help of a master in village Library or in school building. Before the date of the *utsav* the people of the village prepare a stage of bamboo, carpet, and different types of decorated clothes. The characters of the drama are prepared by doing make-up by the local painter. Generally, the drama is staged in day time and at night some local artists make a programme by singing song or dance. They use different types of instruments, loudspeakers and lighting systems to make the function attractive. Through this drama they show the fidelity, responsibility and loyalty of the Assamese woman to husband in the society.

Generally, the Joymoti utsav is a traditional practice of Ahom community which is a strong traditional form of communication. Now, the villagers have almost forgotten about it and did not practice it since three-four years.

The songs using by both men and women folk during different social occasions like naming of a child, marriages, *bhagawat path* and *kirtan path* also communicate religious and social themes to the village men and women. In the following discussion folk songs are analysed as a source of communication where women have played a major role in the four villages:

Aai Nama

The term *baaj-ulua* means to come out from house with a newly born baby. The women of the village sing songs during the naming ceremony of the baby. They invite all the nearby neighbourhoods of one's own caste and others with whom interactional, bilateral relationships in terms of exchange of food exist. All the invited women sit together and perform some religious activities; they sing songs to protect both mother and the baby from bad evils. The immediate function of this traditional media is two-fold; one, it brings social interaction among families and castes and two, it provides recreation.

Thus, the villagers of Bhuyan, Charal and Borbahoni practiced it as a traditional way of communication which has deep impact on social life of rural people.

Biya Nama

During girl's puberty ceremony and marriage ceremonies these songs are sung by women. They demand some gifts (especially sweets and cash) from the girl's relatives through this song. They have also sung the values of fidelity to one's husband and in-laws, glorification of women's personalities.

The Biya Nama is only prevailing in the villages of Borbahoni and Bhuyan. Generally communication among women is much more than males through this traditional folk media. Besides, social life they discussed agricultural matters such as new seeds, shortage of human labours, diseases of transplanting and storing seeds etc.

Na-bhui Song

During agricultural activities like ploughing, harrowing and harvesting, farmers sing songs. Actually these types of songs help them to forget their physical strain during cultivating time. Besides recreational value, they strengthen the religious beliefs and attitudes.

Thus, these types of traditional songs are found in all the four villages.

Hari Nama

The youths assemble in a *Namghar* in the evening and sing emphasizing gods, deities, and values of a pious dutiful, religious life. It entertains the children, elders and other people who gather them to listen. It helps bring some sort of unity among people of different *jatis* of a particular stratum. They use traditional instruments like *nagara*, *khul* (drum) and *talas* (two metallic plates) which make the *Nama* more enjoyable. After finished it, villagers discuss and make planning on the matters such as cleaning of *Namghar* campus including construction, collection of money, religious festivals etc.

These *Hari Nama* are practices by the communities of Ahoms, Hira, and Bhuyan in the three villages i.e. Charal, Borbahoni and Bhuyan.

Bhagawat Paath

The name itself implies that the *paath* is recitation of *Bhagawat shrastra*. The ritual specialists of the villages with the help of an assistant translate the original stories depicted in the different *sluks* (chapter of *Bhagawat*) to other *Bhakats* gathered round him in the house or in an institution, because this *paath* can be arranged individually or collectively to protect his family or village as a whole from ominous or evil-eye. The ceremony begins with a *yatra* of *Bhagawat* in a boat made from banana tree and leaves. They start from the place of ceremony with a group of *bhaktas* by singing songs and playing instruments like *khul*, *talas* and *mridang*. Two or three persons carry this *Bhagawat-rath*, followed by the music party and women, children and *Bhakats*. The women of each family give a *Seleng Sador* (white cloth) on the road and the party ride over this cloth. Besides, she takes blessing from that group by offering an *orihona* (gift) and later she takes this cloth to preserve carefully in an almirah. The group winds it up after visiting nearby villages and start reciting the *Bhagawat*. Generally when this *paath* is performed in an institution, i.e., *Namghar* they use loud speakers for seven days and for seven nights. The people come from remote places to hear and recite the *paath* because it is open to all *Bhaktas* or *Bhakats* who have knowledge about *Bhagawat Paath*. These types of communication among people help share the religious, cultural and social knowledge within and outside them and make them unite. It also works as an agent of social control.

Thus, communication through bhagawat paath is being seen in the villages of Bhuyan and Charal. Villagers' meets in these occasions help each other for getting new information on various matters including agriculture, family, marriage, disease, governmental facilities, scheme, loan, subsidy, seed etc. So, communication through folk media is frequent in these two villages.

Kirtan Paath

The bhaktas of Vaishnav religion perform *Kirtan paath* to forward them in a rightful way. This paath can be performed at any time; generally the villagers arrange it to the convenience of all the families. In this practice they lecture the *sluhks, ghukha and pod* depicted in *kirtan*. In this ceremony also people come from different places and offer gifts to the *Namghar* for getting prosperity in future life. The arrangement committee (i.e., the villagers) fully take care of the guests coming from different places. They arrange some foods for *bhaktas*. This type of folk activities helps the villagers to communicate with outside world and exchange their feelings, thoughts, religious knowledge and life story.

Thus, Kirtaan path also shows a way of communication among families in the four villages.

Shankar Utsav

This ceremony is performed by the villagers on the death anniversary day of *Mahapurush Sri Monta Shankar Deva*, the guru of vaishnav religion. The villagers (vaishnav) believe that when the bhaktas of the *Sakta* religion sacrificed animal increasingly then Shankar Deva established this religion to rescue. So, sacrificing animal is strictly prohibited in Vaishnav religion. To respect the guru, the villagers make a *Paal Nama Prakhang* (citation of Bhagawat) in the village *Namghar*. The other activity of the ceremony is the same as the ceremony like *bhagawat paath* and *kirtan paath*. These types of traditional media give chances to communicate with outside world and disseminate information from one place to another. The vaishnav families of Borbahoni and Charal practice it in the village namghar with the help of other families of the village.

Marriage, Kinship and Communication

Types of Marriage

Types of marriage vary by the way people acquire a life partner. Broadly, these are of two types; namely, (i) arranged marriage and (ii) love marriage. Arranged marriage is a traditional practice in which a boy's parents beg for the girl as a bride. It indicates superior status of the girl's family. Love marriage is a type where both boy and girl select each other as their life partner. The types of marriage in the villages are as follows:

Table 4.7
Marriage Types in the Families of the Villages
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of Marriage	Charal	Bhuyan	Lahdoigarh	Borbahoni	Total
Arranged Marriage	34 (61.81)	24 (46.15)	60 (52.17)	61 (60.39)	179 (55.42)
Love Marriage	21 (38.19)	28 (53.85)	55 (47.83)	40 (39.61)	144 (44.58)
Total	55 (100)	52 (100)	115 (100)	101 (100)	323 (100)

Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

Majority of the families (55.42%) have marriages through their arrangements whereas over two fourths (44.58%) of the families have marriages through love. In Charal, most (61.81%) of the families had arranged marriages against 38.19% of love with marriage. Three fifths (60.39%) of the families had arranged marriages in Borbahoni and over half of them (39.61%) had marriages through love. In Lahdoigarh also over half of families (52.17%) arranged marriages and over two fifths (47.83%) had done love marriages. In Bhuyan village majority (53.85%) of families had love marriage and over two fifths (46.15%) families had arranged marriages.

For life partners, the villagers now do not confine themselves to some specific region, area or community. Freedom to choose their life partners is given to the children. So, marriage is not only taking place within a community, but also inter-community marriage is taking place. The following table shows the types of mate selection in the villages:

Table 4.8
Types of Mate Selection in the Families of Four Villages
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of Marriage	Charal	Bhuyan	Lahdoigarh	Borbahoni	Total
Intra-caste	50 (90.91)	45 (86.54)	114 (99.14)	99 (98.01)	308 (95.35)
Inter-caste	5 (9.09)	7 (13.46)	1 (0.86)	2 (1.99)	15 (4.65)
Total	55 (100)	52 (100)	115 (100)	101 (101)	323 (100)

Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

The table shows that 95.35% of the families have the cases of intra-caste marriage and a few (4.65%) have inter-caste marriages cases.

In Lahdoigarh, 99.14% of the families have intra-caste marriages and a very few (0.86%) have caste marriages followed by Borbahoni having 98.01% families with intra-caste and 1.99% with inter-caste marriage. In Charal and Bhuyan villages also 90.91% and 86.54% families had intra-caste marriage while 9.09% and 13.46% of the families had inter-caste marriage respectively.

Thus, there are more families having the intra-caste or community marriage in the four villages. Except Bhuyan village inter-caste marriage is found very less. There exists a particular set of practices of marriage, negotiations, customs which involve a pattern of communication. Such pattern of communications deciphered from kinship and marriage, customs and practices provide insights for understanding the nature of traditional communications and villagers' contact with outside world.

Generally they prefer the bride or groom of the same *pontho*. (One's own caste people following the same type of rules and regulation in religious activities) A marriage may be possible in the same village. So, patrilateral or matrilateral cross cousin marriage is impossible. Therefore outside contact of a family arise through marriage and kinship. The following table shows the distribution of place and distance of the spouse in the villages:

Table 4.9
Place and Distance of the Spouse among the Villagers
(Percentages in Parentheses)
Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

Distance From Home (in kms)	Charal			Bhuyan			Lahdoigarh			Borbahoni					Total	
	Village	Town	Total	Village	Town	Total	Village	Town	Total	Village	Town	Total	Total Village	Total Town		Total
10	41 (35.66)	11 (27.5)	52 (33.54)	18 (16.52)	12 (25.53)	30 (19.24)	50 (18.65)	3 (9.68)	53 (17.73)	63 (28.37)	2 (22.22)	65 (28.14)	172 (24.08)	28 (22.04)	200 (26.99)	
20	31 (26.96)	13 (32.5)	44 (28.39)	50 (45.87)	13 (27.66)	63 (40.38)	38 (14.18)	7 (22.59)	45 (15.06)	19 (8.56)	5 (55.56)	24 (10.38)	138 (19.32)	38 (29.92)	176 (23.75)	
30	19 (16.52)	09 (22.5)	28 (18.07)	16 (14.67)	10 (21.28)	26 (16.66)	70 (26.11)	8 (25.80)	78 (26.08)	61 (27.48)	--	61 (26.41)	166 (23.24)	27 (21.25)	193 (19.03)	
>30	24 (20.86)	07 (17.5)	31 (20)	25 (22.94)	12 (25.53)	37 (23.72)	110 (41.06)	13 (41.93)	123 (41.13)	79 (35.59)	2 (22.22)	81 (35.07)	238 (33.33)	34 (26.77)	272 (30.23)	
Total	115 (100)	40 (100)	155 (100)	109 (100)	47 (100)	156 (100)	268 (100)	31 (100)	299 (100)	222 (100)	09 (100)	231 (100)	714 (100)	127 (100)	841 (100)	

The place from where a spouse is drawn also shows the communication with various culture and community people through marriage. The data reveal that majority (30.23%) of spouses married from above 30 km. Besides, over one fourth (26.99%) of spouses were drawn from distance of 10 km and over one fifth (23.75%) of them from 20 km distance. A few of them (19.03%) came from around 30 km distance. Further, over one third (33.33%) of those who have married from above 30 km are rural areas against town areas (26.77%). Those who married from 30 km distance they also found that rural areas (23.24%) than urban (21.25%). Over one fourth (29.92%) of persons from urban and one fifth (19.32%) of persons are married from rural areas within 20 km. fourth (24.08%) of persons from rural and over one fifth (22.04%) of person from town married within distance of 10 kilometers.

As the marital alliances of all families are within forty five kilometers from the villages, these families have their kinship relations within short distances. They have more exchanges for agricultural and other requirements from their kinsmen. The choice of finding prospective grooms and brides are mainly influenced by the considerations like kinship, landholding or economic status of the family and distance between the places. Marriage negotiations by and large are mainly a family and *jati* communication affair. Occurance of marriages is therefore, mainly through kinsmen and friends.

More information and ideas are exchanged when the relatives visit to each other. Generally there concern with the mutual well-being, family and village socio-religious activities, advantage and disadvantage of the daughter-in-law. Besides, news and views like rains or weather conditions, economic prosperity of the family, debts, loans, market prices of tea leaves, paddy are also discussed. This type of visiting helps the farmers to know about the government facilities, techniques of agriculture development like new seeds, pesticides, manure and its usefulness. Besides, this kinship relationship also helps education of children, financial help and finding matches for marriageable girls and boys.

Language and Communication

As Assam is dominated by Assamese language, communication also goes with this language when they interact with one another on different occasions. The words Assamese like *tumi* (you), *apuni* (to elder person), *ma* (mother) *deota* (father) and *bhani* (sister) etc refer to kinship and strengthen the medium of interpersonal interaction which is an effective means of communication.

In Lahdoigarh communication happens through own dialect within the village system and Assamese in outsides. Besides, all the members of the village know Assamese as they learn it in their schools.

In Borbahoni, Oriya people use oddiya language to communicate among themselves and Assamese for outside their community.

Thus, the villagers have much more interaction through the traditional means of communication. Although some modification is arising in the field of their socio-cultural life, it does not mean the rejection of the traditional traits in their day to day activities. Rather traditional media still prevail as a means of communication in the four villages. So, Assamese is dominant language among the four villages.

Symbolic Communication

Use of symbols is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of man to understand, interpret, and communicate with his fellow beings and with nature and super natural beings. It is a quick and effective. It relates with ones culture. Signals, signs, and symbols are the part of non-verbal communication. Many anthropologists have work on symbolic aspects of culture (Douglas 1970; Turner 1967; Firth 1977). A few are interested in general structural principles like binary opposition of black: white, life: death, etc involved in symbolic communication and human thinking in general (Levi Strauss 1963). Leach (1976) mentions different modes of communication like singing, folk media, dancing, worshiping, rites, festivals, beliefs and customs. He further says the ultimate goal of all these modes of communications is to transform ideas to other. He also contrasts two theoretical positions of the empiricists and rationalist for studying social reality and feels that the ultimate aim should be to explain why things exist rather than mere description. The imperialists are interested in the social and economic interactions while the rationalists or

structuralists are interested in human mind and the ideas and ways of thinking. Honigman (1963) asserts that a whirlwind design has an especially happy significance for the Hopi Indians of Arizona. It symbolizes the whirlwind that precedes rain. During the growing season rain promises life and abundance for these desert people.

Many religious symbols and signs are used on festivals, and ritual occasions throughout the year. Every morning the women of the village sweep the front yard, use incense sticks and recite mantras in their so called *Gushai-Ghar* (a small house for prayers, pujas etc). During various festivals and fairs drawing of religious images, symbols are a common signs of the four villages. The use of some of the religious symbols in the rural societies is related directly to the pattern of beliefs which are magical in nature and can be termed as animistic. Many houses and shops use some mantras in written in steel or in a wooden frame insides their houses. Superstitious behaviour and conceptions associated with the health and magical practices are also symbolic in nature.

For example, many of the health problems of people as well as animals are supposed to be due to evil-eye. To ward off this ill effect, they burn chillies, or in some cases offer blood of a red hen to the ill person to make them normal. This type of magico-religious pattern of behaviour gives the people a psychological and religious satisfaction. These contradict the modern ideas and thinking. On failure of crops on certain occasions, they light a *Saaki or Banti* (a kind of lamp lit mustard oil) on cultivated ground. The villagers also practice harvest-feast with the neighbour called *Na-khua*. Besides, if suddenly earthquake occurs they have a habit of screaming called *uruli* (one kind of utterance through mouth) throwing *jharu*, some instrument of weaving and home appliances etc. So, such type of signs and symbolic behaviour (abstractions of experiences, beliefs and attitudes) prevails in the four villages.

Thus, the villagers of charal, Bhuyan and Borbaoni are using different symbols in their day to day life than Lahdoigarh it because of exceptional life style of tribal people like Mishings.

Itinerant Mendicants

Itinerant mendicants are one of the common sources to disseminate message from one place to another. During his/her visits to various families, generally women come and offer grains. Sometimes, the villagers help them by giving money, clothes and other necessary goods. They generally give authentic information regarding different matters. So, this shows how village socio-cultural and religious order: customs, relationships, beliefs, norms, etc. influence the communication patterns in the villages.

The above discussion is on some of the folk media, songs, theatricals, mendicant, beliefs and magico-religious practices as a form of symbolism, hence of communication.

Age Groups and Communication

Besides political and health issues, the villagers i.e. Charal, Bhuyan, Laghdoigarh and Borbahoni are discussing on agricultural matters also. The classification of age groups and sex distribution of the villages is given in the following table.

Table 4.10
Distribution of Villagers into Age Group and Agricultural Communication
(Percentages in Parentheses)

Age group	Charal N=150			Bhuyan N=86			Lahdoi garh N=244			Barbhorni N=220			Grand Total N=700		
	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	T Regularly	T Occasionally	T Rarely
18-25	2 (1.33)	4 (2.66)	15 (10.00)	-	2 (2.32)	7 (8.13)	5 (2.04)	9 (3.68)	17 (6.96)	-	7 (3.18)	21 (9.54)	7 (1.00)	22 (3.14)	60 (8.57)
26-33	9 (6.00)	17 (11.33)	3 (2.00)	3 (3.48)	9 (10.40)	2 (2.32)	20 (8.19)	17 (6.96)	10 (4.09)	29 (13.88)	9 (4.09)	1 (0.45)	61 (8.71)	52 (7.42)	16 (2.28)
34-41	25 (16.66)	7 (4.66)	6 (4.00)	17 (19.76)	3 (3.48)	1 (1.16)	32 (13.11)	21 (8.60)	3 (1.22)	35 (15.90)	6 (2.72)	-	109 (15.57)	37 (5.28)	10 (1.42)
42-47	30 (20.00)	2 (1.33)	-	19 (22.09)	4 (4.65)	-	39 (15.98)	7 (2.86)	3 (1.22)	28 (12.72)	8 (3.63)	6 (2.72)	116 (16.57)	21 (3.00)	9 (1.28)
48-55	11 (7.33)	4 (2.66)	2 (1.33)	9 (10.40)	2 (2.32)	2 (2.32)	26 (10.65)	19 (7.78)	4 (1.63)	32 (14.54)	11 (5.00)	6 (2.72)	78 (11.14)	36 (5.14)	14 (2.00)
56-63	3 (2.00)	9 (6.00)	1 (0.66)	-	6 (6.97)	-	8 (3.27)	4 (1.63)	-	14 (6.36)	6 (2.72)	1 (0.45)	25 (3.57)	25 (3.57)	2 (0.28)
Total	80 (53.33)	43 (28.67)	27 (18.00)	48 (55.81)	26 (30.23)	12 (13.95)	130 (53.27)	77 (31.55)	37 (15.16)	138 (62.72)	47 (21.36)	35 (15.90)	396 (56.57)	193 (27.57)	111 (15.85)

Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

Among the farmers of four villages 56.57 percent communicates regularly on agricultural matters, while 27.57% and 15.85% communicate occasionally and rarely.

The families in the age group of 18-25, majority (8.57%) of farmers rarely communicate, followed by occasionally (3.14%) and regularly (1%). Majority (8.71%) of 26-33 age grouped farmer discussed agricultural matter regularly whereas occasional (7.42%) and rarely (2.28%) in four villages. Of the total regular communicating farmers, majority (16.57%) of farmers lies between the age group of 42-47 followed by occasionally (3%) and rarely (1.28%). In the age group of 48-55, 11.14% of farmer regularly, 5.14% of occasionally and 2% communicate rarely followed by regularly, occasionally (3.57) and rarely (0.28%) within the age group of 56-63.

The communication pattern by village, shows that 62% of farmers communicate regularly in Borbahoni village, followed by Bhuyan (55.81%), Lahdoigarh (53.27%) and in Charal (53.33%). The variation can be observed on the basis of total farmers, information sharing behaviours, availability of sources of information, levels of education etc.

Although the communication cannot be limited within the age group, it can be seen on different subject matters like agriculture, political, health communication etc. In case of agricultural communication, village grocery shops, festivals and pujas are closely related agencies and also their gathering at rice mills help communicate in their age groups.

It is observed that agricultural communication happens more between the age group of 34-41 in four villages. They discuss agricultural matters like kinds of seeding according to suitability of land, using of preferable fertilizers, practice of insecticides and pesticides in agricultural field etc. Among the four villages, farmers of Bhuyan often discuss these matters as they grow hybrid seeds like Arize 6444. During field visit, it is also observed that farmers of charal village communicate with each other about further development of surplus agricultural production at their leisure time. In case of Lahdoigarh farmers, it is notable that agricultural communication is mostly observed between female to female members as they equally participate in agricultural activities.

Thus, communication through age groups is found more among the same age category.

Gender and Communication

Gender is found one of common factors related with agricultural communication. Gender communication can be made by density or connectedness. Density represents the proportion of actual ties to number of possible ties in the system (Rogers and Kincaid 1981). It is stated earlier (table 2.15) that in study area, 700 populations are engaged in agriculture and all male and female is equally (350 male and 350 female) participate in agriculture. But, in case of discussion on agricultural matters, male and male discussion on agricultural matters is observed more than male and female discussions. But, it is notable that male and female communication happens more within family members and neighbours. The following table represent gender wise communication of the villagers with officials:

Table 4.11
 Villagers' Visit to the Block Development Office (BDO) for Seeds
 (Percentage in Parentheses)

Frequency of Visit	Charal			Bhuyan			Lahdoigarh			Borbahoni			Grand Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Weekly	--	--	-	2 (8.69)	--	2 (6.25)	--	--	--	--	--	--	2 (5)	--	2 (3.39)
Fortnightly	2 (20)	1 (20)	3 (20)	2 (8.69)	1 (11.11)	3 (9.37)	--	--	--	--	--	--	4 (10)	2 (10.52)	6 (10.16)
In three Weeks	2 (20)	2 (40)	4 (26.66)	4 (17.39)	3 (33.33)	7 (21.87)	2 (40)	1 (25)	3 (33.33)	1 (100)	1 (100)	2 (66.66)	9 (22.5)	7 (36.84)	16 (27.12)
Monthly	6 (60)	2 (40)	8 (53.34)	15 (65.21)	5 (55.56)	20 (62.6)	3 (60)	3 (75)	6 (66.66)	1 (50)	--	1 (33.34)	25 (62.5)	10 (52.63)	35 (59.33)
Total	10 (100)	5 (100)	15 (100)	23 (100)	9 (100)	32 (100)	5 (100)	4 (100)	9 (100)	2 (100)	1 (100)	3 (100)	40 (100)	19 (100)	59 (100)

Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

The table shows that only a few villagers (3.39%) visit agricultural offices in a week, whereas one tenth (10.16%) of villagers visit offices in two weeks. Over one fourth of the villagers (27.12%) visit offices once in three weeks and almost three fifths (59.33%) of villagers visit the BDO's and agricultural office once in a month. Furthermore, only 5% of male farmers visit offices weekly for information on seeds whereas one tenth of male and female villagers visit the office fortnightly. Over one third (36.84%) of the female and one fifth (22.5%) of the male villagers visit agricultural offices once in three weeks. Majority of male and female (52.63% and 52.63% respectively) villagers visit once in a month for seeking information on seeds.

Thus, the male villagers are mostly visit to agricultural office as compared to female villagers. Genderwise communication for seeking information on seeds, outside the village, happens more in three weeks in a month. The villagers of Bhuyan and Charal are visit more frequently than rest of two villages.

Most of agricultural activities are jointly done by males and females. The villagers often come across different channels and sources for agricultural activities. The distribution of villagers into sources of agricultural schemes and loans is as follows:

Table 4.12
Sources of Information of the Villagers on Loans
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Sources of Information on Loans	Charal			Bhuyan			Lahdoigarth			Borbahoni			Grand Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Friends	4(17.39)	-	4(12.90)	8(28.57)	2(18.18)	8(20.52)	3(37.5)	-	3(25.00)	-	2(50)	2(20)	15(23.08)	-	15(17.25)
Neighbour	4(17.39)	4(50)	8(25.80)	4(14.28)	2(18.18)	7(17.95)	2(25.00)	2(50)	4(33.33)	3(50)	-	3(30)	13(20)	8(36.36)	21(24.14)
Relatives	2(8.69)	-	2(6.46)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2(3.08)	-	2(2.29)
Fellow Farmers	3(13.05)	-	3(9.67)	2(7.15)	-	4(10.25)	-	-	-	-	-	-	5(7.69)	-	5(5.75)
Agricultural offices	10(43.48)	4(50)	14(45.17)	14(50)	6(54.54)	20(51.28)	3(37.5)	2(50)	5(41.67)	3(50)	2(50)	5(50)	30(46.15)	14(63.63)	44(50.57)
Total	23(100)	8(100)	31(100)	28(100)	11(100)	39(100)	8(100)	4(100)	12(100)	6(100)	4(100)	10(100)	65(100)	22(100)	87(100)

Source: Field Data Collected from the Villages during March/April 2011

The data show that out of total 1424 villagers only 87 (6.10%) villagers are aware about agricultural information on loans and schemes. Half (50.57%) of villagers got information from agricultural office, followed by neighbour (24.14%) and friends (17.25%).

Majority of farmers got loan information from either from fellow farmers or nearby agricultural offices. Over three fifths (63.63%) of families got information from their friends, followed by neighbours (45.45%) and relatives (9.09%). A few of them got information from fellow farmers (5.75%) and relatives (2.29%). The females have only two source of information: three fifth (63.63%) of females got agricultural information from agricultural offices and 36.36% got information from neighbours. Among male villagers over two fifths (46.15%) got information from the offices, followed by friends (23.8%), neighbour (20%), fellow farmers (7.69%) and relatives (3.08%).

Thus, agricultural offices are more helpful to villagers for information regarding loans.

Kins and Communication

Kinship includes relationship through blood (consanguineal) and relationships through marriage (affinal). In every society, formation of groups and the regulation of behaviour depend to some extent on socially recognized ties of kinship. A kinship system includes all relationships based on blood and marriage that link people in a web of rights and obligation, the kinds of groups that may be formed in a society on the basis of kinship, and the system of terms used to classify different kins (kinship terminology). Kinship system in a society is constituted by its cultural symbols.

The people of Assam use the word *atmiya* to denote any kin. But the term has wider connotations. According to Kishore Bhattacharjee and Ananda Chandra Bhagabati (1996), “an *atmiya* is a person with whom one can feel an affinity of his soul”. The word *atmiya* is derives from Sanskrit word *atma* (soul). It is a broader term used for identified relationship between two persons or a group of people, but there have some other sub-terms like *pariyal*, *mitir*, *kutum*, *bandhab* etc. which denoted separate groups on the basis of blood relation, marriage, religious sects, and friendship.

Thus, more information and ideas are exchanged when the relatives visit a family. Generally they are concerned with the mutual well in being, family and socio-religious activities in the village, Besides, news and views like rains or weather conditions, economic prosperity of the family, debts, loans, market prices of tea leaves and paddy are also under discussion. These visits help the farmers know about the government facilities, techniques of agricultural development like new seeds, pesticides, manure and its usefulness. Besides this, kinship relationship also helps in education of children, financial help and finding matches for marriageable girls and boys. Women equally play an important role with men regarding information network flows from various informal groups, kinship, friends etc (Jiggins 1993; Martin & Adams 1987; Joshi et al. 1995).

Some cases are found in all the villages where communication happens through kinship groups. In Borbahoni, most of their kins are inhabitant in tea garden. So, their discussion also related with tea plantation, cutting, lifting tea leaves, daily wages, searching of new occupation etc. In Lahdoigarh, villagers are communicating with kopah toil Mishing gaon or their kinsman from Dhemaji or Dhakuakhana for any kind of helps or information. In this way, kinships communication on agricultural matters is also found in Charal and Bhuyan village. This communication is seen in the form of visits on various occasions or conervation over telephone among them.

Landholding Size / Class and Communication

Size of land holders still has an important role in rural societies in developing countries like India. It is found that the large land holders seek more information from various sources. Big land owners often contact with agricultural offices, seeds and fertilizers keepers etc. Gram Sewak also try to communicate those big land owners and through them they easily disseminate any information. High class farmer of a particular society got more information than low class.

In the study villages it is found that the literally and economically sound farmers got quick information either from mass media or from group communication sources. Many cases are found in the villages among the large landholders who often communicate with the official and reverse. This is because of interested from both sides (information seeking and sharing).

Villagewise observation shows that communications among farmers are somehow depend on size of landholding as they have same level of income and others similiarity relating to agriculture. Experiences from the village show that in Borbahoni agricultural communication any matters villagers firstly prefer the farmers having equal status with him. Exchange of *moi*, *nang-ol*, *kasi*, bullocks are happens with intimate and almost equal size of landholding farmers. In Lahdoigarh, families firstly prefer own relatives within the village for communication in agriculture followed by neighbours. This pattern of communication helps the villagers to communicate each other by sharing own experiences and difficulties.

Now, major structural patterns of agricultural communication are re-capitulated here.

1. Public places like market, grocery shop, Namghar (temple) and card playing places are important for agricultural discussions. They are centres of communication from where the information spreads to other people. Almost all sorts of information- recreational (jokes), religious prediction, political news, agricultural activities and festivals- are matter of discussion. These gossip centres help to get new information about the outside world in the four villages.
2. Communication within and outside of their own caste happens in the four villages. In Borbahoni, inter-caste communication is higher than rest of the three villages as it has different caste and communities. There is more intra-group interaction in the castes of the particular category because of ritual norms of purity and pollution. However, secular places like shops and other places help inter-group interaction.
3. The role of traditional headman is still stronger in Lahdoigarh than rest of three villages it because of less impact of modern education, strong religious beliefs, unity among the villagers etc.
4. Communication through Na-bhui, have seen specially at the time of late tilling where the farmers get helped from neighbouring villages, friends, relatives etc. which is mostly seen in Lahdoigarh and Borbahoni. This is only because of the farmer families used more traditional ploughing implements than power tiller, tractors etc. But, communication at the time of seed transplanting happens equally in all the four villages.

5. Religious tours, oracles have great impact on social life of the villagers which further helps to agricultural communication in the four villages. Some economically sound families visit these places by their own vehicles.
6. Rituals are sources as well as ways of agricultural communication where religious priest takes an important role. These patterns of communication are found in all the four villages.
7. Bihu festival is another important channel of communication found in all the four villages. The families visit to neighbours, relatives where communication happens on various issues relating from preparation of land to harvesting.
8. Communication through folk media has seen much more in Charal than rest of three villages. The villagers have devoted lots of labours, energy to make the play/drama/Bhauna successful. It is also observed that every evening some *Bhakats* with youths recites *Nama* in the village Namghar (temple) in Charal specially in the month of Bhado. The villagers of Bhuyan also did same religious communication by performing *Bhauna*, *Nama Kirtana* and various pujas in their village Namghar.
9. In many aspects the upper caste people take helps from other caste people like traditional treatment in case of stomach diseases, fracture or muscular pain etc. But, again, communication with lower caste or community people is happening mostly through agricultural activities.
10. Communication through bhagawat paath is being seen in the villages of Bhuyan and Charal. Villagers' meets in these occasions help each other for getting new information on various matters including agriculture, family, marriage, disease, governmental facilities, scheme, loan, subsidy, seed etc. So, communication through folk media is frequent in these two villages.
11. Communication through traditional headman is seen more in Lahdoigarh village. In a kind of discussion like religious, agricultural, festivals or dispute the headman is crucial in the village. The power is executed through meeting known as *Kebang* (Gaon Sabha).
12. Any new information religious, agricultural, visit of officials and other-comes to be known through different gossip centres and in religious temple. It can be said that the role of announcer is played by the *Gaonburha*.
13. The ritual priest of the respective caste interact with certain jatis and influences their attitudes, customs and practices and helps in finding

- auspicious days and timings for commencement of agriculture, occupational, domestic and socio-religious activities like finding a bride or bride-groom, performing naming ceremony of a child, buying domestic or agricultural appliances, auspicious day for entry into a new house etc.
14. Majority of the villagers are Hindu they visit the Hindu temple or Namghar like *Dhekia-khua* Namghar (Jorhat), *Bottadua* (Borpeta) and *Aathkheelia* Namghar (Golaghat), *Jagannath temple* (Puri) to religious purposes.
 15. There are more families having the intra-caste or community marriage in the four villages. Except Bhuyan village inter-caste marriage is found very less. There exists a particular set of practices of marriage, negotiations, customs which involve a pattern of communication. Such pattern of communications deciphered from kinship and marriage, customs and practices provide insights for understanding the nature of traditional communications and villagers' contact with outside world.
 16. The villagers of Charal, Bhuyan and Borbahoni are using different symbols in their day to day life than Lahdoigarh it because of exceptional life style of tribal people like Mishing.
 17. Agricultural communication happens more in the age group of 34-41 in the four villages. They discuss agricultural matters related to kinds of seeding according to suitability of land, using of preferable fertilizers, practice of insecticides and pesticides in agricultural field etc. Among the four villages, farmers of Bhuyan often discuss these matters as they grow hybrid seeds like Arize 6444. During field visit, it is also observed that farmers of Charal village communicate with each other about further development of surplus agricultural production at their leisure time. In case of Lahdoigarh farmers, it is notable that agricultural communication is mostly observed between female to female members as they equally participate in agricultural activities.
 18. 99.07% of families perform Lakshmi, followed by Saraswati (76.47%), Vishwakarma (38.08%), Kali (27.55%), 26% of Tusu and Karam puja. In Borahoni, 97.02% in Lakshmi, 88.11% in Kali, 24.75% in Saraswati, 15.84% in Vishwakarma and 83.16% in Karam and Tusu puja perform in the village. It is notice that variance of performing puja is only Vishwakarma where 17.39% in Lahdoigarh, 63.63% of families are found in Charal village.

19. Majority (30.23%) of spouses married from above 30 km. Besides, over one fourth (26.99%) of spouses were drawn from distance of 10 km and over one fifth (23.75%) of them from 20 km distance. A few of them (19.03%) came from around 30 km distance. Further, over one third (33.33%) of those who have married from above 30 km are rural areas against town areas (26.77%). Those who married from 30 km distance they also found that rural areas (23.24%) than urban (21.25%). Over one fourth (29.92%) of persons from urban and one fifth (19.32%) of persons are married from rural areas within 20 km. fourth (24.08%) of persons from rural and over one fifth (22.04%) of person from town married within distance of 10 kilometers.
20. In Lahdoigarh medium of communication happens through own dialect within the village system and Assamese in outsides. Besides, all the members of the village know Assamese as they learn it in their schools. In Borbahoni, Oriya people use oddiya language to communicate among themselves and Assamese for outside their community.
21. Over half (51.30%) of the villagers communicate or discuss within the group of 35-75 age group; Over three fifths (37.13%) of villagers' communication happens within the group of 15-34 age and over one tenth (11.57%) of villagers communicate among the old age group
22. A few villagers (3.39%) visit agricultural offices in a week, whereas one tenth (10.16%) of villagers visit offices in two weeks. More than one fourth of villagers (27.12%) visit offices in three weeks and almost three fifths (59.33%) of villagers visit BDO and agricultural office in a month. Furthermore, only 5% of male farmers visit offices weekly for information on seeds whereas one tenth of male and female villagers visit the office fortnightly. Over one third of female (36.84%) and over one fifth (22.5%) of male villagers visit agricultural offices in three weeks. Majority of male and female 52.63% and 52.63% respectively villagers visit once in a month the offices for seeking information on seeds.
23. Out of total 1424 villagers only 87 (6.10%) villagers are aware about agricultural information on loans and schemes. Half (50.57%) of villagers got information from agricultural office, followed by neighbour (24.14%) and friends (17.25%).

In sum, social structure as a communication channels is closely related with agricultural development in rural India, specially rural Assam. The parameters like age, gender, class, size of landholding, religion, caste etc are found important in agricultural communication as well as development. Important and relevant information regarding seeds, fertilizers, irrigation, products and marketing quickly diffuses through these structural channels in the villages.