

Chapter III

A Profile of the Study Area: Dhemaji District

3.1 Geographical Location and Administrative set-up of the District:

Dhemaji district is one of the border districts of North-East Assam which is situated on the Northern bank of the Brahmaputra. Geographically, the location of the Dhemaji district is between $94^{\circ}12'18''$ E and $95^{\circ}41'32''$ E longitudes and $27^{\circ}05'27''$ N and $27^{\circ}57'16''$ N latitudes. The district covers an area of 3237 sq. km and is a basically plain area lying at an altitude of 104 m above the mean sea level. This district shares boundaries with Brahmaputra River and Tinsukia on the east; Arunachal Pradesh on the north; Brahmaputra and Dibrugarh on the south and Lakhimpur on the West.

Initially, the graphical area of Dhemaji district was a part of the then Lakhimpur district with its headquarters at Dibrugarh. The Dhemaji district was declared as an independent district covering Dhemaji Sadar and Jonai subdivision, on 1st October, 1989. There are four revenue circles in the Dhemaji district- Dhemaji, Sissiborgaon, Gogamukh, Jonai and also have five numbers of development blocks i.e. Bordoloni, Dhemaji, Machkhuwa, Sissiborgaon and Murkong-Chellek. There are four towns in the Dhemaji district i.e. Dhemaji, Silapathar, Gogamukh and Jonai Bazar. Murkong-Chellek is the last railway station of the North-East frontier railways and thus serves as the gateway to the eastern districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The main administrative features of Dhemaji district can be explained with the help of the table 3.1.

Table 3.1 (As per 2011 Census)

a) No of Subdivision- 2	Dhemaji
	Jonai
b) No of Revenue Circle- 4	Dhemaji
	Sisiborgaon
	Gogamukh
	Jonai
c) No of Development Block- 5	Dhemaji Sadar
	Mashkhuwa
	Bordoloni
	Sisibargaon
	Morkung Selek
d) No of main cities and towns- 4	Dhemaji
	Silapathar
	Jonai Bazar
	Gogamukh
e) Total No of Village	1319

3.2 Demographic Features: - (According to the 2011 census)

Dhemaji District, with a population of about 6.9 lakh is Assam's tenth least populous districts, according to the 2011 census. Total geographical area of Dhemaji district is 3237 kms and it is the tenth biggest districts by area in the state. Population density of the district is 212 persons per kilometre square. The total male population is 3, 51,249 and the total female population is 3,34,884. The sex ratios are 953 female per 1000 male. According to 2011 Census, only 7.04% of the total population lives in urban areas, and the remaining 92.96% live in rural areas. The all features are explained with the help of the table 3.2 (a) and (b)

Table 3.2 (a) Demographic Profiles :- (As Per 2001 and 2011 Census)

Demographic Features	2001	2011
a) Total no of population	571944	686133
b) Male	294643	351249
c) Female	277301	334884
d) Population Growth	19.45	19.97
e) Literacy Rate	64.48	72.70%
i)Male	74.41	79.84%
ii) Female	53.86	65.21%
f) Sex Ratio	936 female (per 1000 male)	953 female (per 1000 male)
g) Density	177 per sq. Km	212 per sq. Km
h) ST Population	2993215 47%	325560 (48%)
i) SC Population	159561(5.8%)	160111 (6%)
j) Rural Population		637848 (92.96%)
k) Urban population		48285 (7%)

Source: Population census of India, 2001 & 2011

Table no 3.2 (b)

Urban-Rural Distribution of Population of Dhemaji District

Indicator	Urban	Rural
Population (%)	7.04%	92.96%
Sex Ratio	934	955
Average Literacy Rate	84.02	71.81%
Male Literacy Rate	88.42	79.16%
Female Literacy Rate	79.31	64.12%

Source: Population Census of India, 2011

3.3 Religion:

Table 2.4 depicts the distribution of population by religion. As per official census of 2011, Hindus are the largest religious community in Dhemaji district followed by Muslims, Christians and others. Of a population of 686,133 people, Hindus constitute 95.47% , Muslims constitute 1.96%, Christians constitute 1.27%, Sikhs account for 0.04%, Buddhists for 0.13%, and Jains account for 0.02% of this population.

Table no 3.4

Distribution of Population by Religion

Religion	Percentage
Hindu	95.47%
Muslim	1.96%
Christian	1.27%
Sikh	0.04%
Buddhist	0.13%
Jain	0.02%
Other	0.92%

Source: Population Census of India, 2011

3.4 Cast and Communities:

Different indigenous communities and tribes are found in the Dhemaji district. There is a huge percentage of Other Backward Classes (OBC) population comprising of Ahom, Chutia, Konches etc. The main schedule tribes include Mising, Kachari, Sonowal, Bodo, Deori, Lalung, Hajong, Ex- tea garden community etc. The Mising occupies dominant place in this Dhemaji district followed by Sonowal and Kachari, while the ex- tea garden community occupies only a negligible part of the total population.

3.5 Economy of the District: -

Generally, the economy of Dhemaji is agro-based. Fishing, sericulture, and driftwood business are practiced in smaller scales. The people of the rural areas of Dhemaji are mainly dependent on agriculture as primary sources of income while people of urban areas are mainly dependent on small informal sector enterprises. Shortage of power, lack of good communication system, lack

of proper irrigation as well as marketing facilities adds to the poverty of the district. Dearth of any major and small industry worth the name is also responsible for multiplying the problem of unemployment and galloping explosions in the rate of population growth has already shown signs of negative impact. However, since 2018, this District has seen advancements in commercial and business activities, health sector and education due to better connectivity with the rest of the state, with the introduction of the Bogibeel bridge. The Bogibeel bridge provides direct connectivity from Dibrugarh to Itanagar.

3.6 Scope of Informal Sector in the Urban Areas of Dhemaji District:

The Dhemaji district, which is the area of present study, is one of the severe flood affected districts of Assam. In this district, the industry sector as well as service sector absorbs a very small proportion of the labour force. There are only a few numbers of officially registered cottage and micro industries in the district. Due to heavy floods every year in this region, the crops get damaged. The more severe damage is caused by flash floods and these lead to widespread deposition of sand on fertile agricultural land. These affect the socio economic condition of the poor cultivators and agricultural workers. Therefore, there is no better option for the agriculture workers other than to change their occupation and/or move towards the urban areas or distant places in search of better livelihood, thereby being compelled to enter the informal sector.

The characteristic of the labour market in Dhemaji district presents a gloomy picture. The labour force participation, work force participation as well as unemployment rate is much lower than other districts of Assam. Table 3.3 depicts that the rate male and female work-force participation rate is 49.7 and 6.1, respectively, and overall workforce participation rate of Dhemaji district is 28.7. Apart from this, the district also has low labour force participation rate and a high percentage of unemployment rate. The LFPR of Dhemaji district is 33.9 which is far below the state level. The percentage of male unemployment rate is much higher than state average.

Table 3.5

Percentage of Labour Force Participation, Work Force Participation and Unemployment Rate of Dhemaji District

labour force participation			work force participation rate			Unemployment rate		
Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
55.9	10.8	33.9	49.7	6.1	28.4	11.1	43.5	16.1

Source: HDR survey, 2013

In Dhemaji district, there are different types of informal sector enterprises and activities where informal self-employed workers are engaged. The main activities have been categorized into three groups, which are- services, retail trader as well as street vendors.

1. *Retail Trade:* - It includes small stationary shops, small grocery shops, small tea shops, books and other equipment shops.
2. *Services:* - It includes all services such as E-rickshaw, DTP & Xerox center, beauty parlor, Hair cutting salon, tailoring shops etc.
3. *Street Vendors:* - They sell various items such as pani puri, fresh fruits, vegetables, fishes, fresh meat, cooked food, cold drinks etc.

Conclusion: - From the above discussion, it is clear that although this district is a agro-based, according to the 2011 census, but the recent District Administrative Report 2017 said that the maximum agricultural workers has been changing their livelihood and living conditions due to each and every year of heavy flood and engage in various small informal sector enterprises. So the present study about the informal sector in urban area of Dhemaji district is very necessary.