CHAPTER I
THE PROBLEM : ISSUES AND HYPOTHESES

The objective of the present study is to understand the structure and process of social stratification in three villages of Dibrugarh district in Assam. We have studied three types of villages, namely, a multi-caste, a uni-caste and a tribal village. These three villages, perhaps, represent the structural variations in rural Assam to a large extent. To understand the process of stratification, we have analysed the levels of various economic, ritual and social institutions in general, and the three villages, in particular. We have also dealt with the structure and process of social stratification from various theoretical viewpoints, namely, functional and dialectical.

Most of the studies on social stratification in India are centred around the various aspects of caste system, and its ritual dimension has received maximum attention. The principles of hierarchy such as hereditary occupational specialisation, hierarchical organisation and repulsion have been the basis of analysis of caste system\(^1\). Similarly, several scholars like Hocart, Hutton, Srinivas, Dumont and others have explained the nature of Indian caste system on the basis of ritual criteria\(^2\). Thus, the caste system has been viewed as a unique form of institution as well as a system of

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Hindu social stratification. Dumont explains that Indian social stratification is based on the notion of purity — pollution. The ritual aspect of caste encompasses the other spheres of stratification, such as, economic and power. The economic and political domains are distinct from the ritual aspect of caste and still they are subordinate to it as they are encompassed by the notion of pure and impure. Weber conceives caste as an extreme form of class, and according to him castes are 'closed communities', where status distinctions are not only by conventions and laws, but also by rituals. Srinivas mentions that pollution and purity are the basis of caste hierarchy. Intercaste relations are normally governed through pollution — purity in the Hindu society. Orenstein observes that 'pollution' tends to produce 'alienation and dehumanization' in the Hindu society. Alienation and dehumanization are the basis of hierarchical differences in the Hindu society.

However, there are a few studies in which caste as well as other dimensions of stratification such as economic position, style of life, educational, occupational and political status, etc. have been studied for understanding the nature of social stratification. Mukherjee has analysed relations between various classes and also examined their relations with caste hierarchy.

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Beteille has considered rural stratification system from Weberian point of view as he has found caste, class and power as distinct concepts. Beteille refers to incongruence between caste, class and power, and also mentions about 'caste-free areas' and differentiated structures which have emerged after Independence. Sharma classifies all the studies on rural stratification into two categories, namely, based on caste and extra-caste dimensions. He considers stratification as a structure as well as a process. Miller has observed that class, status and power were traditionally tied to the caste group in terms of its economic position vis-a-vis other caste groups. Today, because of the development of individual ownership on land, the situation is becoming much more diversified with status and power increasingly individualistic. However, changes are coming in a constant dialectical process.

The studies which give over-emphasis on caste refer to 'summation of roles', but these do not reflect the other aspects of stratification which cut across the caste hierarchy. The 'multi-dimensional' studies consider caste as one of the aspects of stratification and not the sole determinant of status and power. Different criteria of status and power such as ritual, economic and political are considerably distinct, not only analytically, but also existentially, in several respects.

In regard to the traditional society it has been observed that class and caste go together. Caste position coincides to a large extent with the class position. Bailey refers to this situation. Therefore, it is necessary to study economic relations

independent of caste relations. But alternate view is that caste should be examined from the class point of view. In practice, castes have functioned as classes under the cover of rituals, division of labour and \textit{Jajmani} system.\footnote{13}

Beteille observes that various institutional structures have emerged during the last four or five decades. These are:
(a) the growth of money economy as opposed to inherited status,
(b) a new type of caste-free occupational structure,
(c) new educational system, and
(d) new political structure. The upper castes have taken up modern education, white-collar jobs, and political offices, etc. The intermediate and lower castes have remained far behind than the upper castes in the new differentiated institutional structure.\footnote{14}

Sharma observes that status based on caste rank is still the predominant basis of societal evaluation in rural Rajasthan, but dissimilarities are also pronounced at the intra-caste level. Therefore, class distinctions within a caste, and multiplicity of castes within a class, are found due to certain structural strains and stresses such as land reforms, adult franchise and elections, modern education, etc. The process of 'proletarianisation' and 'bourgeoisification' of the ex-landlords and ex-tenants respectively refers to the class cleavages. But process of status-maintenance is also found simultaneously. The latter puts a check on basic structural changes in the traditional status system. Consequently, the process of structural strains affects a limited section of rural community, hence continuity of the traditional hierarchy to a large extent.\footnote{15}

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Thus, there are studies which give emphasis on caste alone, namely, conducted by indologists, ethnographers and administrators. Some studies have emphasised both caste and class, while others have taken into account caste, class and power. Finally, those who have followed the Marxian approach, have examined caste from the class point of view.

Studies on caste and stratification suffer from several limitations. There is an overemphasis on 'encompassing' nature of the system, because of the prevalence of pollution-purity in all spheres of life. Such a view makes caste as a deterministic force. It does not explain the historicity of the system and certain changes which have occurred from time to time. Caste mobility and anti-caste movements have occurred in Indian society at various points of time, both in ancient and medieval India. Intracaste distinctions, migration, mobility of individual, etc. were not quite frequent, but were also not absent. In view of some studies made by social historians, it is necessary to examine the nature of caste and caste mobility.

However, most of the studies have applied the functional approach to the study of caste and stratification. Their main emphasis is on finding equilibrium and harmonic relations between the various components of society. The caste system, thus, according to the functional approach, has 'organic' relations between various caste groups. The organic relations between castes have been weakened due to various factors of change. Different castes have now become independent of each other, in other words, they exist as independent segments, but remain attached to the norms of caste hierarchy. Bailey refers such a change in caste system as segmentation. Incongruence and disharmony in place of congruence and harmony are the emerging patterns. In the process of change in the stratification system the 'harmonic' nature of the society has been affected. Beteille observes: "In this context a harmonic social system would be one in which there is consistency between the existential order and the normative order; inequalities not only

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existed in fact but are also accepted as legitimate". Indian society in the past possessed 'harmonic' social system where social inequality was not considered as inherently unjust; it was rather matched by an ideology and social sanction. Incongruities also existed in the traditional rural society, but these were also legitimatized and accepted by the people, and hence 'harmonic' 17.

Our view is that different segments of rural society, which are hierarchically placed in the community, could not have 'harmonic' relations. Logically speaking, relations based on inequality of status, rank and differential privileges could not be harmonic. Hence patron-client relations were relations of power and high and low positions. The Jajman (patron) was big or substantial landholder; he belonged to high caste and enjoyed certain privileges whereas the Kamin (client) was a landless or had a small piece of land, who belonged to a low caste and did not have privileges like the upper caste patron. However, stratification system is not changing from its 'organic' character to 'segmentary' one; as the 'organic' character of society implies complete interdependence of different parts, which was not found always in the older system. 'Segmentary' nature of relations refers to the independence of different units, and such a pattern also would not be quite true. Thus, 'segmentary' and 'organic' character of society should be seen more in regard to certain contexts rather than as an evolutionary process of change in Indian society.

Associated with the concepts of 'organic' and 'harmonic' character of traditional society there is the concept of 'closed' social system. In traditional rural society, 'closed' system existed where class and power went together with the caste hierarchy. Caste society could be considered as a 'closed' system as caste, class and power were found coterminous with each other. The 'closedness' of caste stratification is associated with the principle of 'status summation'. If a caste was high or low in economic sphere, it would also be high or low in political, social and ritual spheres as

The notion of completely closed traditional social system is, however, not correct as mobility at the levels of individual and family also occurred in the traditional society. For example, Burton Stein has reported occurrence of spatial mobility in medieval Indian society. This implies that individual families or a group of families and not necessarily all the families of a caste group migrated from one place to another. Intra-spatial mobility also occurred particularly when the king gave favourable decrees to certain families or to the entire group. Sharma observes that corporate mobility is found mainly in certain ritual and cultural spheres. Mobility in economic and political domains is generally found at the individual level. Intra-group differentiation was not absent in ancient and medieval India. Today, the distinctions prevail at all the levels, namely, group, family and individual, and position of a group, family and individual cannot be judged adequately by measuring status at either of these levels of mobility. Analysis of composite status of families or units of mobility facilitates understanding of 'incongruence', 'segmentation' and 'disharmony' as the patterns of stratification. Thus, the system of stratification was both 'closed' and 'open' due to circumstantial and infrastructural factors such as means of transport, communication, avenues for jobs, etc. These contingent factors, however,


have changed to a large extent resulting into lessening of certain inequalities. However, certain new forms of inequalities have emerged and some old forms of inequalities have transformed into new ones. It is clear that changes in traditional stratification do not have a unilineal direction, that is, from 'cumulative' to 'dispersed' inequalities as observed by Beteille\textsuperscript{22}. Certain 'dispersed inequalities' existed even earlier, and they became 'cumulative' in course of time, and some of the earlier 'cumulative inequalities' changed into new cumulative inequalities. This point has not been taken into consideration even as a logical possibility by both Beteille and Bailey.

The studies on caste stratification generally do not consider other dimensions of stratification such as power, occupational mobility, migration and education, etc. They have not analysed these changes at the levels of family and individual, as corporate-ness of caste has been taken for granted as a force subsuming family and individual. Consequently, these studies are confined to the understanding of high and low status relations between various caste groups. Only a few studies have examined hypotheses related to class and power. The study of extra-caste factors of mobility have facilitated understanding of the horizontal distinctions between the members belonging to the same stratum.

Thus, it could be concluded that caste, class and power did not coincide with each other having one-to-one relationship, as norms of commensality were violated by certain groups and families. Certain caste groups were forced to migrate, and the migrated groups changed their caste ranks. Incongruities and intra-caste distinctions of political and economic nature were found even before the British rule in India. It is necessary to examine the relationship between caste, class and power not as distinct phenomena, but as one comprising the other. In other words, one should know the incorporation of class and power into caste, of power and caste into class, of caste and class into power, etc. Weberian distinctions between 'class, status and party' would not be quite relevant if

such a view is taken up for understanding of social stratification in India. The following statements could be made about relationship between caste, class and power: (a) A family may belong to a high caste, and also may possess high economic and power positions. (b) A family with high caste rank may possess high economic position, but not power position. (c) A high caste family may have lower economic standing, and high power position. (d) A family with lower economic and power positions may belong to a high caste. (e) A low caste family may also have lower economic and power positions. (f) A family with low caste and economic positions may yield considerable amount of power. (g) A family with low caste status and high economic position may not yield power substantially, and (h) A low caste family having sound economic position may yield considerable power. We have examined these hypothetical possibilities of status congruences and incongruences with a view to understand caste, class and power as independent phenomena.

II

The studies of stratification in India reflect four major approaches viewing the nature of stratification in different ways. Max Weber and Ghurye have emphasised the cultural - universalistic approach, and have explained the caste hierarchy in terms of values and ideological dimensions of Hindu culture. The cultural universalistic approach observes that caste-like cultural phenomena of stratification could be found in most traditional societies. Dumont slightly deviates from this view as he emphasises the particularistic nature of the Hindu ideology and value-patterns in the spheres of pollution — purity and caste hierarchy. This particularistic nature of caste hierarchy is unique to the Indian situation and may not be found in any other society.

The universalistic structural approach is found in the studies of Berreman and Barth in which caste stratification has been conceived as a particular case of general phenomenon of social stratification. They find several common referents between the Indian caste system and the caste like system of United States of America\(^2\). Caste stratification has also been studied as a unique system of relations, however, such relations are found in Indian society only. Caste is viewed as system of inequality found among the hierarchically ranked hereditary groups for marriage, occupation, division of labour, performance of rituals, etc.\(^2\)

In studying the social stratification in upper Assam we have adopted the structural particularistic approach. This approach is relevant for understanding the caste system in general, and in particular at the regional level. The peculiarities of the caste system have been more unique at the regional level. For example stratification system in upper Assam is different in several ways in regard to the composition of Assamese society, and the criteria and norms of ranking of the groups and individuals compared to other regions of Indian society. Norms regarding pollution and purity are not very rigid. The role of cults has been more in dividing the people than norms of caste hierarchy. Influence of tribalism has not allowed emergence of a strong caste-like system as it is found in other parts of India. Migration of people to Assam from north India. Migration of people to Assam from north India and Bengal has not also allowed the emergence of a stable caste system. In view of these structurally particularistic features of the society in Assam, the structural — particularistic approach to the study

of stratification could prove beneficial. We have made a comparative study of three villages of Dibrugarh district in upper Assam. As the ethnic composition of the three villages are different they cannot be combined for discussion and analytical purposes. However, they are separately discussed and compared for getting analytical insight. Upper Assam is inhabited both by castes and Hinduised tribal communities. These groups are found together in the same village as well as they live separately in different villages. The Hindu caste groups are predominantly Vaisnabites (with an exception of a few followers of Saktaism), while the tribal groups have become Hinduised through the process of Vaisnabisation. However, some have retained the ethos of their tribal culture. Thus, there has been a synthesis of the three religious traditions, namely, the orthodox Hinduism, Vaisnabism and tribalism. These three religious traditions have affected differentially the social stratification in rural Assam.

Due to predominance of tribalism, Vaisnabism and Hinduism caste does not function as a rigid system pervading elaborately all over the society. Dumont's view about caste as an ideology is not found adequate in the case of Assam because of lack of elaborateness of rules and regulations. Such a situation is comparable with D'Sauza's idea of rigidity — flexibility dimensions and Marriott's scale of 'elaboration' of caste in various parts of the country. The process of absorption of the various tribal groups into the fold of the Hindu caste system is an important dimension in the study of flexibility of the caste system in Assam. The process of transformation of tribes into castes, and its consequent impact on the local hierarchy is not considered in the earlier studies. This may reflect the new dimension of the nature of elaborateness of the stratification system in the local situation. The Hinduised tribal social

structure is neither fully governed by caste norms nor by norms of tribalism. Such a situation combines 'closedness' of castes and 'openness' of tribes. Hinduism, Vaisnabism and tribalism are interrelated to each other in Assam. These primordialities refer to the intrinsic nature of social structure. Factors external to the structure of Assamese society have affected this plural structure combining Hinduism, Vaisnabism and tribalism in recent years.

The structural - particularistic approach alone for studying the stratification system would not be sufficient as this explains its static nature. Stratification refers not only to structure, but it implies 'process' also, along with continuing features. The processual view demands a historical accounting of the norms and relations related to social stratification. Stratification is treated here both as a given thing and as an on-going processual phenomenon.

Caste, class and power have been considered as the main foci of the present study. However, this study is different from other studies as considerable emphasis is given on the historicity of the Assamese society for understanding the existing system of stratification. Caste, class and power could be studied as independent of each other and also as parts of overall stratification system. The present study is also different from other studies as individual, family and group have been studied as distinct units, as well as intertwining parts of a generalised aspect of social structure, that is, social stratification. Such a scheme of analysis facilitates not only a deeper understanding of mobility in caste, class and power, but also provides an opportunity to examine the role of ascription and achievement in status determination.

Therefore, on the basis of the above discussion the following points could be derived about social stratification in rural Assam.

Social structure of upper Assam consists of various castes and Hinduised tribal groups. There are two sets of norms, namely, norms related to caste system and norms related to tribal groups. These norms have come down closer, and affected both caste groups and the tribal people. The interaction between the two people, tribals and Hindu caste groups, has affected tribal alienation, autonomy on the one hand, and the rules of marriage, pollution - purity, commensality, etc. of the caste groups on the other. However, the two segments of Assamese society have assimilated with each other to a large extent, although they have, to a certain extent, retained their own characteristic features. It is obvious, such a segment of relations at the level of norms as well as practice is somewhat significantly different from those prevalent in other regions of India.

In upper Assam, hereditary specialisation of occupations did not emerge to the extent as it was in other parts of India. *Jajmani* system was not a characteristic feature of the local groups. The predominance of uni-caste and uni-tribe villages discouraged emergence of caste-based occupations and *jajmani* relations. Since two important bases of social stratification, namely, hereditary specialisation of occupations and division of labour on caste lines did not prevail in Assam to a considerable extent because of its differential nature of society compared to that of other states, social stratification in Assam is different today than that of other parts of India. The various Hinduised tribal groups along with the Hindu castes form the units of social stratification. Such a composition of villages in Assam has resulted into evaluation of different norms of ranking in regard to intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic relationships.
The Method of Study

The region of upper Assam lies at the periphery of the north-eastern corner of India, and it is predominantly inhabited by various Hinduised and semi-Hinduised ethnic groups. Though there are some Hindu caste groups, they are less than the above groups of people.

With a view to make a comparative analysis, a multi-caste, a uni-caste and a tribal villages have been studied. These three villages were chosen in a close proximity. The three villages are unique in the sense that such types of villages are generally not found in other parts of India. It is true that in most of the cases various Hinduised and semi-Hinduised ethnic groups live in separate villages of upper Assam, nonetheless they are also found to live in the Hindu caste villages. However, multi-caste villages are quite rare in upper Assam.

Stratification as a system of social ranking cannot be understood if one confines his investigation to a single village only. It is necessary to examine the extension of position one occupies, and power and influence one exercises to other villages in the area. Most of the studies on social stratification lack a comparative focus and analysis of extensions of the bases of status and power.

The three types of villages which were selected for the present study were not found in the same Block Development area, and therefore, they were chosen from two contiguous Blocks of Dibrugarh district. The multi-caste villages are quite rare in upper Assam, hence such a difficulty. The headquarters of the two Blocks are at a distance of five kilometers only. The villages are: (1) Hatkhola - a multi-caste village, (2) Chakalibaria - a uni-caste village and (3) Kapahua - a tribal village. The villages are well connected with the district headquarters as well as with other nearby towns by metalled roads and are easily accessible by bus. They are adjacent to the Block Development Offices, and are influenced by forces of urbanisation. In all the villages, agriculture is the principal occupation. The villages fall under two different Assembly constituencies, but they are under the same Lok Sabha
constituency. They have been differentially affected even by the same factors of change due to variations in their social structures. It is important to see how the same forces of change have affected differentially these villages.

Information was collected through the historical records, documents, writings as well as through the techniques of observation, interview and case study. Documents, reports, historical and sociological studies of the Assamese society and some other accounts were used in collecting data concerning different phases of the rural upper Assam. The chapter on the traditional stratification system of the Assamese society and the feudal social structure have been written on the basis of these secondary sources. Secondary data relating to other spheres of life of the present society were utilised to gain a deeper insight about the Assamese society and to generate primary data.

Preliminary information about the three villages was collected through a census and enumeration schedule. As the three villages are inhabited by three hundred and thirty three households only no sampling was needed. All the respondents were interviewed for collecting information regarding the family background, history of caste, socio-cultural aspects, economic position, rituals and power-positions, etc. For the purpose of collecting information, an interview guide was prepared. Several case studies were conducted relating to the specific aspects of life of the people. The case studies covered rites de passage, ethnicity, religious institutions, rituals, political leaders, village - leaders, traditional authority and disputes relating to social, economic and political matters, etc. The information collected through interview guide and case - study were supplemented by the data collected through observation. During the period of study various socio - cultural ceremonies and events, which took place in the village, were also observed. This enabled me to understand the interactions between the people involved in certain specific situations. Interactions between different - classes of people related to their economic relations were observed during certain agricultural operations. This shows that a 'rigid' research design was not preferred for collecting data. The feeling was that such a scheme could give the necessary flexibility and ensure
adequate understanding of the people. The field-work was carried out from August, 1976 to May, 1977.

The data collected through all these sources have been analysed qualitatively in the light of points which we have highlighted in this chapter.
THE REGION

Assam is divided into ten districts for administrative purposes. On 2nd October, 1971 the old Lakhimpur district was divided into two administrative districts, viz., Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh. This bifurcation took place after completion of the 1971 census operations, therefore, Dibrugarh district is considered along with Lakhimpur district in the 1971 census. The area of Assam is approximately 99,610 square kilometres having a total population 14,957,542, of which the rural population is 13,630,561 (91.13%), and the urban population is 1,326,481 (8.87%). The provisional estimates of state's income for 1971-72 indicate that agriculture alone contributes 55.6 per cent of the total income of the state. More than 70 per cent of the population depend on agriculture, and the agricultural workers are accounted for 65.7 per cent of the total working force of Assam. The district of Lakhimpur (including Dibrugarh district) has about 3,884 villages and an area of about 12,792 square kilometres according to 1971 census; whereas in 1901, the villages were only 1,123. The rural population of this district is 1,682,665 (88.09%), and the urban population is 154,724 (11.91%).

Nevertheless, Lakhimpur is the most urbanised district of the state. In 1960, industrial organisations of this district contributed about 51.4 per cent of the income of the province, of which tea industry alone offered 33.2 per cent. The principal industries are tea-manufacturing, oil refinery, light-engineering, saw mills and plywood factories. About 40 per cent of the factory labourers and 45 per cent of the total industrial output of Assam come from this district.

MAP I. Assam showing the district of Dibrugarh.
MAP: II. Dibrugarh district showing location of the villages.

Highway
Railway

*1 Hatkhola Village
*2 Chakalibaria Village
*3 Kapahua Village

NORTH LAKIMPUR

Dibrugarh Town

Tinsukia

Doom Dooma

Sibsagar

0  18 Km

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Moran
The newly formed Dibrugarh district is situated on the south bank of the Brahmaputra river in upper Assam. The region came under the Ahom rule during the middle of the thirteenth century. Gradually when the people of this region including that of Lakhimpur converted themselves into Mayamaria Vaisaabism, they were popularly known as Mataks. After a long civil war (1770 - 1795) the Mataks established their rule in this territory and continued even after the British annexation in 1826; but in 1842 the region was incorporated into the British territory.\(^{33}\)

The district of Dibrugarh has two important towns, namely, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia. Since the British rule Dibrugarh has been the most important town of the province. In 1872, it was little more than a village, nine years later its population increased more than 150 per cent, and in 1891 its population became double of the population of 1872.\(^{34}\) Being situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra river Dibrugarh has become an important centre of trade and commerce in upper Assam and Tinsukia has also established its importance as a trading town. The district is full of tea-gardens. In the last few decades its population has increased by 35.36 per cent.

The tea industry has played a significant role in the economy of the district since its establishment in 1840. There are 185 registered tea-manufacturing factories, and the total area under the tea-plantation is about 118,966 acres; about 11.41 per cent of the total population is supported by the tea industry.\(^{35}\) There are also large number of religious estates (satra estates) persisting since the medieval period. Besides, the raiyatwari land tenure system was introduced in the district by the British Government.

Dibrugarh is one of the districts of the Brahmaputra valley, and its alluvial land is suitable for paddy cultivation. The

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34. Census of India, Assam, 1891.
Principal economy of the district is based on agriculture. Out of 617,000 workers of Lakhimpur, in Dibrugarh there are 275,000 cultivators, 30,000 agricultural labourers and 312,000 other workers. Thus cultivators and agricultural labourers constitute 49.4 per cent and other workers 29.1 per cent of the total workers of the two districts. As the valley is criss-crossed with a large number of tributaries of the Brahmaputra and the rain is abundant being 75" to 100", it is heavily flooded during the rainy season. Thus crops cultivated in this region are extremely uncertain. In 1973, about 29,000 acres of land in Dibrugarh were flooded which affected 99,000 people and damaged crops of about 22 lakhs of rupees.

The Three Villages

Hatkhola, a multi-caste village of the Lahoal Block, is situated about eleven Kilometres away from Dibrugarh town just by the side of the Dibrugarh - Tinsukia metalled road where frequent bus services are available. Besides, Lahowal railway station is easily approachable within a few minutes by a bicycle. The village is at a distance of five kilometres from the Mohanbari airport connected by a metalled road. But the village road is unmetalled, and it is not electrified. Hatkhola is one of the oldest settlements in this region, and has a Vaisnabite satra (monastery) known as Moderkhat Mayamaria Satra, the second biggest satra of the Mayamaria sect of Vaisnabism established in the seventeenth century. Due to the presence of this satra Hatkhola has become a centre of religious activities and pilgrimage for the Mayamarias or the Mataks. Hatkhola has a primary school. Both boys and girls go to a neighbouring village for higher school education. As the village does not have any market to dispose of its agricultural products, the villagers usually sell them in the Ghoramora and Lahoal markets, and both the markets are at a distance of two kilometres. There are only two grocery shops in the village. The Lahoal Block office along with a hospital is located at about four kilometres north of the village. Hatkhola is surrounded by fertile alluvial paddy field most of which

is possessed by the villagers. There is no system of irrigation as it is not required for the summer crop; generally no winter crop is cultivated. The eastern part of the village is encircled by the Moderkhat Tea Plantation which has brought changes in the village economy. The narrow Sessa river skirts the village on its northern border; fishing in it has become a source of income for the Kaibartas - a fishing caste of the village.

Chaklibaria is a single-caste village in the Tengakhat Block situated at a distance of seventeen kilometres from Dibrugarh and Tinsukia. It is situated just by the side of the Dibrugarh - Tinsukia bus road where frequent bus service is available. Chhabua, a small airport, is about ten kilometres away from the village which is connected by a metalled road. The village is adjacent to the Tengakhat market, a growing urban centre having a college, a high school and a primary school, a post office and a hospital. Chaklibaria has also been recently electrified. The Tengakhat Block office is at a distance of two kilometres connected by a graveled road.

Chakalibaria is comparatively a new settlement. Perhaps, due to this reason no tea plantation could grow up adjacent to the village. A straight unmatted road passes through the village, and on both sides of it houses are built up. Chakalibaria is encircled by paddy field which are mostly owned by the villagers. The paddy land is low and fertile formed by alluvial soil, and is inundated by the river water almost every year. This low land is suitable for paddy cultivation, but not for other crops. Irrigation is not required at all. The village has two small grocery shops. The agricultural products are sold in a weekly market at Tengakhat.

Kapahua is a medium-size tribal village situated at a distance of two kilometres on the west of Chakalibaria and the Dibrugarh - Tinsukia road; both are connected by a graveled road on which buses ply regularly. It is about nineteen kilometres away from both Dibrugarh and Tinsukia towns. The Tengakhat Block Development office and a high school are adjacent to the village. In the heart of the village, there are a primary school, a club and a Mahila Samiti. Kapahua has two small grocery shops. There is only one weekly market at Tengakhat for disposing of the village agricultural products.
Kapahua, one of the oldest settlements of the Sonowal tribe of this region, has a long history. On two sides of the village there are paddy field comparatively lower than that of the other two villages, and the village is inundated by river water almost every year. Therefore, irrigation is not required for any summer crop. The soil is alluvial and suitable for paddy cultivation, and due to its low nature other crops are difficult to grow. On the south-western side there is Bagrodia Tea Plantation which has encroached upon a part of the village land.

Kapahua is comparatively more backward than the other two villages. The village road becomes extremely worst during the rainy season. On the southern border of the village there is still a patch of dense forest which was inhabited by wild animals not more than twenty years ago. This indicates that the settlement was established after clearing a patch of forest. This is a common feature in upper Assam that the ever increasing agricultural population use to migrate in the forest or waste land to establish new settlements. Recently the Block Office has been electrified, but the village still remains unelectrified.