CHAPTER I

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1.1. Theoretical Orientation

No socio-economic literature on 'Village Studies' published so far has been able to give any comprehensive definition of village. This is because the village studies are done mainly on the basis of caste which hardly supply us with relevant definitions let alone the stage of abstraction and theorisation.

Till recently socio-economic research in India was mainly done on the tribes and was largely focussed on the tribes and needs of administration. The earliest organised effort in this field was compilation and publication of several volumes of brief and often sketchy accounts on various tribal and caste groups. These works were mainly suggestive accounts rather than academic or scientific as they were mainly intended to guide the administrator with the diversity of custom in the different segments of the country's population. It was further developed by monographic studies through personal observation and enquiry extending over a fairly long period.

With the Post-independent era a new dimension was added to the development of inter-disciplinary research, with the undertaking of community studies. These community or village studies were either descriptive or analytic based either on social control or social stratification or the function of religious institutions in a village. Another type of work is also there concerning a larger area than a village, e.g., the organisation of a particular caste which are not village studies, although the
investigator may have spent all his time in one or two villages due to necessity. Regional studies of the type done in Kerala\textsuperscript{1} and North India\textsuperscript{2} have so far been studies of simple societies. Another type is 'Peasant Village' studies connected with urban markets and with the world outside the village. Both these studies do take account of the complex society outside, they treat outside elements as intrusions and do not fit them into their structural explanations.

The title of most of the 1st Post War books: ‘Village India, Indian village, India's villages — might suggests that villages were being studied as Isolable system. Such an approach would have received support not only from the Village Republic theory of Indian rural structure, but also from tradition of socio-economic surveys centered on single village.

India is a country of villages. In 1971, 439 million of India's 548 million persons were classified as rural by the Indian Census. These 360 million or 82\% of the population live in 567,000 villages. Such a massive majority in villages in India pose a serious demand for scientific survey and layout for the development of the nation of which they are an important part.

The importance and exigency of knowing the village is well emphasized by the sayings of the father of our nation — Mahatma Gandhi. According to his view, if through India the world wants

\begin{itemize}
\item[2.] Mayor, Adrian C., Land and Society in Malabar, Bombay, 1952.
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freedom in the true sense of the word, one is bound to recognise the fact that people shall live not in towns but in villages, shall live not in palaces but in huts.

A few selected sociologists and anthropologists' view will help one to view a village in its proper perspective.

The villages can be classified into three broad categories—

1. Villages in the vicinity of urban centres influenced by urban culture, economy and political aspiration,

(b) Villages which are linked to urban centres and depend largely on urban feedback and

(c) Remote village which is only a news report aimed only at limited aspects from the point of urbanisation stage.

Dr. Dube has given the following criteria for village typology.

(1) Size, population and land area,

(2) Ethnic composition and Caste-composition,

(3) Pattern of land ownership,

(4) Structure of authority and power hierarchy,

(5) Degree of isolation,

(6) Local traditions.


4. Dube, Dr. S.C., Indian Village, New York, 1955, p. 3.
Ishwaran\textsuperscript{5} has classified India's village on the basis of size, land distribution, economy, caste and religion.

In 'India's Village', M.N. Srinivas\textsuperscript{6} has, however, roughly attempted to define a village as a body of people living in a restricted area, at some distance from other similar groups, with extremely poor roads between them, the majority of the people being engaged in agricultural activity, all closely dependent upon each other economically and otherwise, and having some sense of unity.

On a broad basis village is classified under the (1) Settlement pattern, (2) On the basis of size and its population and (3) On the basis of language.

According to settlement Cohn\textsuperscript{7} plots them into three kinds — (1) the nucleated, (2) the hamlet and (3) the dispersed. Such type of villages are typical of U.P., Delhi, Punjab and some parts of southern India and also the typical tribal villages. Statistically the hamlet oriented villages are most typical in most part of the middle and lower Ganges and parts of Tamilnadu and Andhra. The dispersed pattern is found in many deltic areas, such as the mouth of the Ganges in lower Bengal or the Kerala

\textsuperscript{5} Ishwaran, K., 'Kinship and distance in rural India, International Journal of Comparative Sociology, 6, 1965, pp.81-94.


coastal the southern tip of India and in many of the hill regions in the north — Eastern and Central Highlands. Dr. Miller's 'Village in the North Kerala'\(^8\) is a study on dispersed village. In dispersed village as homesteads are scattered generally on or near the fields owned or worked on by the agriculturists, by mere observation one cannot demarcate the beginning or the end of a village.

M.N. Srinivas\(^9\) on the other hand, differentiates the nucleated village from the dispersed one on the criteria of defensive orientations of the two. He thinks that in a nucleated village the responsibility of defending a village lies entirely on close knit settlement of a village whereas in case of dispersed village, the responsibility is on the head of the each farm; e.g., the Coorgs and Nayars of the Malabar.

Again Cohn\(^10\) differentiates the types of villages on the basis of Agrarian economy. He thinks dispersed village except with hills, is associated/rice production, the hamlet village with a mixed rice and other grain agriculture, and the nucleated usually with wheat, barley and millet production with dry farming.

2. Population and size of a village tends to be co-related with the nature of caste/clan composition and the pattern of political dominance.

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In this light Alan Beals\textsuperscript{11} talked of two kinds of villages.

(i) Village with a small population of single caste, (ii) Small multi-caste villages with dominant caste resident. Though his classification together with some others are nonetheless convincing but 'caste' is not only basis of village classification as the purely tribal villages are not engulfed by Caste system. But so far, the selected tribal village studies by some anthropologists or sociologists are mostly Hinduised and therefore caste-oriented.

There are some of the village studies conducted by some of the sociological anthropological intellectuals. From the linguistic point of view, villages can be classified under unilingual, bi-lingual and trilingual categories.

In the light of above discussion, Indian villages can be classified into four categories—

\textbf{I. Villages with exclusively Hindu caste population} (with single or more caste). Under this type the following village studies can be categorised,—

(1) 'Goshen' - Dr. Newell - 'A Guddy village in the Himalayas';

(2) 'Kasandra' - Dr. Steed - 'Notes on an approach to a study of personality formation in a Hindu Village in Gujarat';

\textbf{11. Beals, Alan Robin, 'Change in the leadership of a Mysore Village' In India's Villages, ed. M.N. Srinivas, pp. 147-60.}
(iii) 'Madhop' - Dr. Cohn - 'The Changing status of a depressed caste';
(iv) 'North Kerala Village' - Dr. Miller - 'Village structure in North Kerala';
(v) 'Tanjore Village' - Dr. Cough - 'The social structure of a Tanjore Village';
(vi) Rahinabad - Dr. Sushila Mehta - 'Social conflict in a village community'.

2. Village with mixed religious groups (Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Sikh, Hindu and Hinduised tribals, Hindu and other minor religious groups)

(i) 'Fatehpur' - Dr. Carstairs - 'An Udaipur village';
(ii) 'Gopalpur' - Dr. Beals - 'A south Indian Village';
(iii) 'Kishan Garhi' - Dr. Mackim Marriot - 'The Social Structure of a Mysore Village';
(iv) Rampura - Dr. Srinivas - 'The Social Structure of a Mysore Village'.
(v) Ranjana - G. Chatopodhyay - 'A village in Rajasthan'.
(vi) Shamirpet - Dr. S.C. Dube - Indian Village.
(vii) Shivapur - K. Ishwaran

3. Villages of Tribes with Hinduised tribes—

(i) Bhil villages of Western Udaipur - Dr. Corstairs - A study in resistance to social change,
(ii) Kolmel - The world and the world view of Kota - Dr. Mandebaum.
4. Villages of pure tribals with traditional structure—

So far no village studies on pure tribal villages are ventured.

In the above classification, the villages with different population composition manifest variety of structures and interaction under similar circumstances. According to Beals classification,¹² villages of first kind are characterised with rich ecology with a specialised economy such as herding, fishing or craft production. The villagers are bound by the ties of biraderi (brotherhood) and their villages tend to be governed by councillors that enforce caste rules and adjudicates other disputes arising from day to day affairs of the village are known to everyone and public opinion plays effective means of social control.

The second type of village is characterised with a single household success during several generations in controlling significant part of the land, one person in his office as headman becomes most powerful and richest within the village. Dube¹³ while discussing about the Shamirpet Village describes such headman as 'Deshmukh'. Single head villages are found in most parts of India. Places like U.P. and Bihar where landlord system prevails the villages of its type are more numerous.

The third category of villages are approximately with 800 to 2,000 people, ten to twenty caste and one landholding caste

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¹² Ibid.

¹³ Dube, Dr. S.C., Indian Village, 1955, p. 45.
such as Rajput, Jat, Okkaligga or Brahmin who is also dominant politically or economically. Power among the dominant caste rests not with the caste but with the individuals and families in the caste usually compete with one another for the power which is directly linked with land control. Often the competition within the dominant caste for natural resources leads to a friction in the village.

In a purely tribal village it is mostly unitary in respect of its authors by structure, the tribal itself being supreme in secular, ritual and cultural village matters. Mostly type one and type two village studies in India have been done and only a couple of ethnographic reports on pure tribal villages have been done. In these type of villages and to some extent in type 3, Caste institution is the very basis of total structure in a village which is the exclusive governing mechanism for interaction, marriage, religion, faith etc. while in type 4 clan and kinship are the basis.

We can hypothetically attributes a federal type of organisation in mixed population of tribal and Hindu caste village. As there is no clear cut allocation of power and authority among the village, either the economic aspect or the numerical aspects acts as a determinants factor for ones status or when both the aspects reach in equal perimeter, there is sort of balanced situation which can't exactly be attributed to federalism, happens to be a situational condition required, it is short lived in the village levels, simply due to lack of special organs
to safeguard the status role and obligation. The traditional framework — caste system is now fast losing its grip on status role obligation due to present changed circumstances.

It can also be pointed out that no village in India is completely autonomous and independent, for it is always one unit in a wider social system and is a part of an organised Political Society. Also in domestic affairs the village is autonomous and independent. The tribal villages, on the other hand, enjoy the bliss of political independence. Unlike the typical Indian village, the tribal village is free from the grip of jajmani organisation feudal system, tenant system etc. A village is representative of the whole tribe, without a social hierarchy. The village headship is not hereditary, one's status is determined by economic and political leadership. Individual personality and merit is of vital importance for village headship.

The nature of village settlement and geography there of is of prime consideration which shows certain cultural pattern. In most tribal villages mostly in warrior villages, the village is located in unaccessible areas with a sense of security and natural advantageous surroundings.

In clan oriented villages a marked difference can be noticed from other Indian village. A multi-clan village settles in segment system and is never so exclusives and clearcut as the size of the land holdings is also influenced by the clan settlement in the village.
Any village, wherever cattle is reared, cattleshed is an important paraphernalia of every household, ornamented by ceremony and rituals. Among the pure tribals with pile dwelling settlement they don't raise cattle as much as professional cattle raisers do, yet they have a separate places attached with rituals and ceremonial sanctity. These rituals are performed at the time of annual festivals that attach special significance to the welfare of the livestock.

The concept of livestock raising also differs from those cattle raising villages and the pure tribal villages. In the former case, cattle is necessary for milk, transport and other economic uses, while for the latter it is necessarily a wealth and food item. In the former case, they attach more value to the subsequent output while in the latter case they are mostly concerned with immediate output. Cow constitutes the vital portion of the dairy in the former case but it is not necessarily true in the latter case.

Another important component of the village is granary. In all agricultural houses, the granaries are aggregated together and isolated from the village periphery. This isolation is a precaution to avoid calamities like accidental fire etc.

**Changing Panorama of the Village**

With the introduction of the Political and Revenue system by the British local parties, the territory of local chief or Raja were abolished which brought significant change in political, legal and economical arena. The pure tribal villages were free
from such encumberances as the tribal chief had the exclusive authority and power within this village territory.

The British rule made the landed property an ordinary commodity which was not prevalent in Pre-British time. The creation of private ownership in land threatened the traditional hierarchy in the village for diverse reasons, village life is engulfed by administration as change in rural institution and culture has become avowed objective of different plans and programmes setup by the Government. This period saw the rapid establishment of schools, improvement of roads, agricultural development, establishment of industries and proliferation of electoral system for national and local elections together with cultural and social factors like Sanskritization, Westernization and detribalization, innovation etc. has induced changes in rural areas. Quite a large number of rural people, due to land scarcity, have embraced industrial labourship. Due to laxity in traditional caste system, the Jajmani system is no longer in vogue. The impact of education on village life is a tremendous one which has totally affected the village structures. As such the villages have undergone deviation in the existing structure of the village headmanship. The social system of the villages is undergoing changes, showing trend towards dependence on urban or national institutions and a wider economy.

The changed traditional and socio-cultural norms of the village is levered by the impact of urbanization. The changed urban-rural nexus has corroded the traditional criteria of rural economy and culture. With the decline of subsistence economy
the farmers are increasingly conscious of the money and profit. Thus the urbanization process has become the dominant factor in boosting up the changes in the villages and in other traditional affairs. In 1961, 18% of the population or almost 80 million Indians lived in 2,700 places classified as towns and cities. In 1901 it was barely 4%, the rate of urbanization in the period 1931-1951 spurt into 12% to 17%. But in the period of ten years (1951 to 1961) it was only about 1% or slightly more. We can identify five components of social change in India14:

(1) The growth of population and the changing demographic composition of Indian Population,
(2) The social as well as the economic effects of greatly increased yields — the Green Revolution.
(3) The increase of the region — Wide communication system and the development of strong regional identities,
(4) The effects of the change in elite structure and
(5) The consequences of modern mass democratic politics for the social structure.

The social transformation due to urban revolution has become the widely discussed phenomenon of academic resources of social sciences. Tonnies, Durkheim, Simmel, Weber and Mark and the representatives of the Chicago school namely Park, Wirth and Burgess responded directly to these social transformation associated with urbanization.

Urbanization in rural areas has narrowed the age old gap between the rural and urban areas, as it is acting as a double edged weapon. Technology has cut through the social barriers as demand for egalitarian living and a good life is yawned by the villagers. They are more drawn to the modern dress and shows a penchant for clubs, cultural associations, theoretical organisations etc., voluntarily organized by the so called 'New Youth' of the villages.

As the peasant villages are undergoing some tremendous basic change due to the impact of urbanization on the villagers, it has created ample opportunities to the researchers on the basis of inter-disciplinary approach to study the trend of changes in the socio-economic conditions of the villages as a result of rapid urbanisation.

1.2. The Present Study

The present study is principally aimed at a thorough probe in the socio-economic change of a few villages lying at the fringe belt of the city of Gauhati which are in the process of assimilation with the expanding urban milieu. Three villages in the vicinity of Gauhati have been selected for the purpose. These are: (1) Garigaon, a large sized, heterogenous village, situated in a para urban area near the Gauhati University campus and the Railway Head Quarter at Pandu-Maligaon;

(2) Hatigaon;

(3) Sijubari
The latter two villages are situated in the Dispur area towards the west of Assam's present capital complex.

In the recent years, definite trends can be seen of these villages slowly merging into urban nexus, although retaining some of their traditional norms, customs, traits and way of life. In the present work a more or less comprehensive socio-economic study of these villages has been made by the author with the principal aim at analysing the urbanisation process. The study has been done within an analytical framework. In the recent past, the city of Gauhati has been growing very fast more or less in a cumulative way. There has been a rapid growth in its population, a phenomenal expansion of trade and business activity, a rapid industrial growth all around and a spectacular spurt in educational and cultural institutions. This more or less sudden and phenomenal growth of the city must have made an impact in varying degrees on the socio-economic life of the villages adjoining it. The changing contours of the villages under study have been caused by different forces in the case of different villages under study. As for example, it is the coming up of the University, Engineering College, Railway Headquarters and a few other institutions in Jalukbari-Pandu-Maligaon area and on the other hand, the establishment of the capital complex and the sporadic growth of industrial and commercial firms in Dispur-Basistha-Kahilipara area which have been the principal urbanising forces for Garigaon and Hatigaon - Sijubari respectively.