Chapter-Six

Summing up and Conclusions

Among the Membas, there are different legends related to their migration history. Lama Kardu Sange Rinzin was the first person to attempt the searches of hidden treasure, i.e. Vheza Shingiri, but couldn’t find any suitable place for human beings. Turden Lordo Gyamt Cho made the second attempt, after proceeding certain distances, he returned due to health problem and died at Molo of Gaza in Tibet. He predicted that in his reincarnation/rebirth he would explore the hidden treasure. It proved when seven years old Cheeje Lingbo told and proved that he was Turden Lordo Gyamt Cho. When attained adulthood, he reached to the place called Vheza Shingiri, many people followed him. The Membas are the followers of Buddhism and live in the Mechukha valley of West Siang District and believed to have migrated from Tibet to present place. Agriculture is the mainstay of the Membas and it is supplemented by utilizing various others the natural resources for their livelihood strategy. They practice agro-pastoralism, which depends on the combination of agriculture and pastoralism most typically with fixed settlement, plus pastures to which the animals are sent in high altitude areas during agricultural season. Natural resources, such as land resource, forest resource and water resource, including animal resource, are perceived as the most important on which
the Membas of Arunachal Pradesh is depended for sustaining their livelihood. Though majority of the Memba people are cultivators but with the passage of time good number of them are engaged in different other occupational activities, such as, owning restaurant, grocery shop, cloths shop and contract works.

In study area, the traditional methods of the resources management are still in practices. Not much change in relation to the natural resource management is observed. Any disputes related to the natural resources are still solved by their customary laws. Government of Arunachal Pradesh had established Forest Range Office in the Mechukha town to look after the forest conservation and management, but no officials record related to the poachers, illegal selling of timber and other illegal collection of forest resources from the study area have been found. However, the local people said that they sold the timber to the official staffs of the Mechukha, especially to the other part of West Siang, who is serving as Government servants in various State Government Departments located in Mechukha. Timbers from pine trees are mainly in demand, some of the Memba people are selling to them (office staffs) secretly. Because of cold climatic condition the demand of firewood is very high and every Government servants are in need of firewood to get ride off the extreme cold condition. By selling firewood, the Memba people earn some cash. They cut tree from forest and sell at the rate of Rs 7000 per truck. It seems that the collection of such huge firewood may lead to the further degradation of the forest area in Mechukha valley.

As per their traditional norm the Memba people did not sale their land to the other tribes but they can sale their land only to the members of their own
community. No officials record or government records have been found that the Memba people sales their land to other tribes of the same circle. Other tribe like Pailibo, Ramos and Tagins are settled in the proper Mechukha Town as they got land allotment from the Government.

The Memba people are follower of Buddhism and believe in the conservation of all living being, so traditionally, they do not practice hunting and fishing. Now a few Memba youth are practicing hunting and fishing for adventurous game or recreation. During my field study, it is observed that the Tagin, Pailibo and Ramos living in the Mechukha are practicing hunting and fishing, and hunted wild animals like, deer, boar and bear are sold in market of Mechukh town to earn some cash amount which Membas never did.

Millet is most important crop for the Memba, and traditionally it was the staple food of Membas. Now rice is the main since one decade 2000s, it also observed that the area under millet cultivation is also diminishing and started cultivation of paddy in wet and muddy soil since one decade 2000s. Memba people are mainly depends on the PDS, (public distribution system), CPO (central purchasing organization) and FPS (fair price shop) for the rice. They did not practice extensive cultivation of the paddy, production from the paddy field is not sufficient for them. So many Memba men and women are engaged as labourers in the road construction carried out by GREF and BRO between Tato to Mechukha to earn cash for purchasing rice. In recent years in 2009-11, many Memba men are engaged in the construction of army bunkers in the border areas.
The main food items of Memba constitute the rice (*Dey*), millet (*Temi*), maize (*Osum*) and they drink local liquor *chang* and butter tea *Jha* along with milk and its products, like, curd, ghee, cheese, butter and churpi (discussed in chapter-two). Millet is the main crop in the agricultural fields, as millet is staple food traditionally. Millets are consumed in different forms, like, powder and millet beer called as *Chang*. Millet has both cultural as well as religious value. The millet powder is used for the preparation of idol or image in ritual, festival and any ceremonial occasion. They started irrigation canal in low lying area for the paddy cultivation. The rice is available in Mechuka market from fair price shop and central purchase organization in a Government undertaking for supply of essential foodstuffs to Government employees posted, labourers engaged in construction and development works at Mechuka. The educated people, young generation, Govt. servants and other businessperson who stay away from their village prefer to take rice; even young people and educated youth who stay in village are also not interested in taking millet. Memba people have started growing some leafy vegetables, tubers and fruits as cash crops to earn some money. They started growing some fruits, like, apple, peer, plum, and kiwi in their horticultural field to earn some cash, but these fruit bearing trees are not cultivated extensively, only a few families have started growing these fruits. Now a day, Membas use chemical fertilizer along with their traditional manure for retaining soil fertility in kitchen garden, agricultural field and even in horticultural field.

Obviously, the land is considered as most valuable property. They believe that the lands are the great wealth of family, they engage themselves in getting the
best out of it, and their livelihood depends mainly on the produce from field. Land as a means of productions, a land resource is the life support system around which the tribal economy and knowledge system evolved. Here, the use of land and its ownership underlies all aspects of social life. In the customary law of the Memba, ownership and inheritance of the land as resource is through male line. The land in the Memba area is classified as per its functional utility, like Ramsa, Lamakos, Phasa, Bogo, Nam and Khimgapse. Women are not right to own or inherit the land property. Traditionally, either eldest son or youngest gets the major share of land property, but in present day, the son who stays with the parents and looks after them in old age, is having right to get major share of land property otherwise, now properties are equally divided among all sons. Widow is having right to own and use the land property of her deceased husband for the sake of her sons. When the Membas were under the control of Tibetan, they had to pay land tax to them, and in case they failed to pay tax, then the defaulters had to surrender their plots of land. The official authority of the Tibetan then used to sell such plots of land of the defaulters to other persons of any village who could pay the amount of land value in lieu of tax. In this way, some families possessed many plots not only in their own village but also in distant villages. When the Membas came under the control of the Government of India, they did not need to pay any taxes to the Tibetans. This right of ownership of land has been continuing as it was since their days of occupation. Nevertheless, the villagers live peacefully without clash for holding plots of land in the villages. However, any dispute related to land or other disputes like marriage, customary law solves illegal encroachment, etc.; Anchal Samity
Members, Gram Panchayat, Goan Borah (GB) and elderly knowledgeable person, constitute the council. When the cases are not settled at the village level, then the village elder or village council forward the case to the court of law.

The Mamba had trade relationship with Tibetan until 1950s when the administration sealed the border and started supply of the essential commodities to this area (Dutta, 2006). The effect of sealing the border had a great impact on the Membas way of life. They had to stop trade relation with Tibetans and began to start trade with other neighbouring tribes and plain people. The facilities of road and air communication, introduction of educational institution in the Mamba area etc, made them aware of the job opportunities in different government as well as private sectors.

Land resource is the prime live support system around which the tribal economy and knowledge system evolved. The knowledge systems are used to nurture and manage the resources in most sustainable way without disturbing the ecological balance. They employed technologies that look primitive and simple but are ecologically adaptive because their implements are ecologically feasible. The land and its management is the central to the whole organization of the society. Hence, the use of land and its ownership underlies all aspect of social life. The Mamba people use different setup of land according to suitability. Plain land are use for house site, slope and dry land is used for the cultivation of millet and wheat. The dump, swampy, and wet land are used for rice cultivation. Hill or high altitude areas, which are used for animal grazing (Goda) area, called as bogo. Above the grazing area bogo, the dense forest area use for the extraction of forest resources
for daily use, the house construction material, hunting area, handicraft item, fencing etc. The Mamba people consider Land as the most valuable property. The term property generally referred to land and man relationship in term of use or control. It covers many aspects, such as, land ownership, land inheritance and land transfers. The land use pattern generally refers to the use of land for various purposes. The Mamba people consider land as the prime wealth of family and they engage themselves in getting the best out of its and their livelihood depends mostly on the produce from field. The different activation, i.e land, viz, agriculture, hunting, fishing, gathering and grazing are embedded in this land and therefore, carries enough significance for the people of the village. In Mamba society the status of the person is determine on the basis of the amount of land one possesses. People who possess more land is considered as rich persons.

The animal (Goda) and fern plant (phaso) play a very important role in the maintaining of soil fertility in agricultural. In busy season, Mamba people graze their animal in high altitude areas. The grazing field is called as hog and grazing hut is called as barang, generally people used to stay this at night. From May to October months, they graze their domestic animal in hog. In early morning after milking, they return to village for other works and again they go to grazing field in the evening. After completing the harvesting, man along with animals move from high altitude area to low lying area and graze their animal in open field and agriculture field during agricultural off-season that is from October to AprilMamba people construct a hut in adjacent to their house, or agricultural field, so that animals can be kept in this hut at night. This accumulated cow dung is then spread
to agricultural field during ploughing, so that the cow dung will be decomposed in
course of time and may serve as manure in agricultural field as well as kitchen
gardens. The Membas use the fern plant *phaso* as manure in agricultural field and
kitchen garden. Memba people did not practice the shifting cultivation or jhum
agricultural rather they practice terrace cultivation in dry land. In terrace field, they
cultivate millets, rice, wheat and maize. They have their indigenous technique to
maintain the soil fertility of their terrace field or cultivation field. They generally
celebrate festival and perform rituals before or after the harvesting of the crops in
order to ensure bumper production of crops, well being of domestic animals, and
prosperity in the community life as a whole.

The Memba area is hilly with full of forests which are rich with various
species of trees. Some trees are used as timber for construction of house, furniture,
household articles etc. The Memba people use the low-lying area as settlement and
cultivation of field, high altitude areas is covered with grassland that is used for
grazing of domestic animals, and top of the hilly region covered with dense forest
is generally used for extraction of resources for the purpose of firewood, house
construction materials, furniture and household articles. At present Memba people
earn some cash by selling firewood which every family need to use to cope up with
extreme cold climatic condition. Generally, they sell the firewood to the
Government or private staffs posted in Mechuka at the rate of Rs. 5000 per/truck.
Such commercialization of firewood caused concerned in the context of forest
conservation, this may lead to over exploitation of forest trees.
Forest and forest products have profound impact on the livelihood of the Memba. The livelihood of Memba is revolves round various occupations such as agricultural, hunting, grazing of animal and food gathering. The abundance of different species of trees, bamboo groves and plantain leaves plays a great role in their material life as they provide them the materials required for house-building, hunting and fishing implements, agricultural tools, domestic utensils and colour dyeing for dress. The materials culture of the Memba is very much dependant on their surrounding environment. The social custom, belief, faith etc. of the Memba reflect a deep and dense sensibility regarding their surrounding environment. The Memba also practice traditional mode of forest conservation and management, these include the protection of plant in the form of sacred-groves called as lu from which the extraction of forest resources is culturally tabooed and also human disturbances are totally prohibited. The field study in the various Memba villages reveals that these people are dependant on the surrounding forest for their day-to-day necessities or requirements. Their traditional belief and practices have helped them in the preservation of their age-old culture and along with it in the conservation of the forest. Some sites or areas having special attributes, which distinguish such area as extra-ordinary usually in religious or spiritual, sense and are called as sacred place. In Memba dialect, the special site or area or sacred place is known as lu. The sacred places the lu can be anywhere, like, spring, waterfall, river, stream, lake, pond, rocks, cave, stone, tree, grove and forest. The sacred groves or forest and sacred water bodies are very prominently found in the study area. The sacred groove comprises of patches of forest or natural vegetation range
from a few trees to a large forest of several acres. Local communities to pay respect to their religious beliefs and rituals that has been running through several generations protect these sacred places. The degree of sanctity of the lu the sacred groves or forest vary from one lu to other. The lu is of two types Lunging and Lukarmeo. The trees if twisted around each other then they are considered as sacred; hence, they do not cut and use such trees. The pine trees of unusual structure, branch and trunk are also considered as sacred; they do not cut or use such pine tree. In Memba, the wild banyan tree (Ficus religiousa) is considered as sacred plant, they do not disturb their surrounding and leave such tree as natural habitation. Some plants and animals have high cultural and religious value. It is believed by Memba people that killing of any wild animal is religiously restricted because they follow the Buddhism, which believe in preserving all living beings.

The Hon’ble Supreme Court had imposed complete ban on forestry operation in December 1996. However, the ban has been lifted in January 1998, but restrictions continue to apply in the working of the forest. This case is also known as forest Conservation case. The judicial intervention has definitely helped regeneration of forest in the state, which were exploited for a long time for industrial uses.

In 1996, Supreme Court has banned the commercialization of timbers in Arunachal Pradesh. Even then, illegal smuggling or selling of timber production is continuously operating in state. The illegal selling of timber is also observed in Mechuka though not dominant phenomena. The official staffs deployed in Mechukha of government job is generally buying the timber from the Memba
people of Mechuka especially tribal officers and staffs are buying timber for their own house construction in their native land. The domestic uses of timber are not restricted, they are using timber for construction of houses, but use for commercial purposes is restricted. Though people are selling the timber in the name of domestic purpose though the restriction on the commercialization of timber has controlled the over exploitation of forest resources.

The Wild Life Protection Act 1972 of India was adopted by Arunachal Pradesh in 1992. According to this Act, the hunting and killing of any wildlife is an offense and is punishable under this act. This Act is against the customary practice of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh because hunting has been the traditional practice of tribes of Arunachal Pradesh since time immemorial. Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh have been practicing traditional hunting for domestic purpose or for self-consumption, but commercialization of wild animal is restricted. Traditionally, Buddhist Memba people are not hunter, but different parts of wild animals especially skin, is used as part of their material culture. Generally Memba people hunt the musk deer and are highly demanded for the medicine property locally called as Kasturi. The portion of abdominal skin covering from naval to male reproductive organ excluding scrotum has the medicine property. It is popularly called as kasturi hunting. These animals live in mountain snow area. For hunting the Kasturi, the Memba hunters stay in mountain snow areas for two–three weeks or more. They sell the kasturi in Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Siliguri and Demapur to some agents. Now some youth members practice individual hunting for recreation
or adventure or enjoyment. The hunted animals are generally for the self-consumption and sometimes sold in the market for some cash.

The valley is dissected by numerous small streams and rivers which are usually originated from the snow covered mountain ranges and glaciers. Thus, all these streams and rivers are perennial in nature. The main river of the valley is Yarjapchu. This river is navigable only in Mechukha valley, but, cascades through deep gorges with high velocity when crosses the hilly terrain after passing the Mechuka valley. This has developed antecedent drainage that is not suitable for navigation. People generally prefer the rivers and streams for fishing activities. Due to the land topography of the area, condition is very favorable for the formation of streams and rivers and these streams and rivers are common natural resources for fishing activities. The studied area is abundant of rivers and streams, but there is scarcity of fish species in rivers and streams. Traditionally as per the religious practices, fishing and hunting of animals are very much restricted. Nevertheless, in the modern context, young people remain involved in fishing activities for entertainment or enjoyment. Villagers collectively own the stream or river flowing through the area of the village as a whole. The individual, clan and community ownership of water resource are also noticed. Earlier days such resource is inherited by either the eldest or youngest son of the family, but presently, sons who look after the water resources and take care of their parents would have the full right over the same. The main river Yarjapchu not only used for fishing activities, but also as a source of firewood collection and transportation. In summer during rainy season, the water carries woods, logs and debris from the upper reaches of the
forest and deposit on the river bank. In autumn and winter, when the water recede, the logs, woods and derbies remain on the bank of river and are collected by the people for firewood. This river is also a medium of transportation for timbers, bamboo and other forest resources. Small timbers, bamboo and other material required for house construction are collected from upper reaches of forest. They transport these forest products through Yarjapchu river, with the help of transporter called jeng a small canoe, made of wood and bamboo. In Mechukha valley, the various streams flow through the villages used in various purposes, like, sources of drinking water, irrigation canal and for construction of the Enda. In fact, there are many sacred water bodies found in the valley, which are having socio-cultural and religious value.

The Memba being the patrilineal society, they traced their lineage through paternal line and they follow the patriarchal family system in which father is the head of the family as well as final decision maker. The married eldest son generally stays in the parental house to look after the parents until their deaths. The Membas practice the clan exogamy. They have preferential system of marriage within the community. However, violation of preferential marriage is not punishable offence, but the couple is looked down upon in the society. The monogamy is the general form of marriage in the Memba society. The Membas are peace loving people in tradition, because of which there are very less incidence of violence among them. Impact of religion has also greatly influenced in the political life. If any dispute arises is amicably solved with the help of influential villagers. There is no well organized so called village council among them, but a council called popularly
known as Kabang is constituted temporally with enlighten villagers and Gaonburas. Memba, follow the of Nyingmapa sect of Mahayana Buddhism. The sacred places of Memba people are known as Gompa and religious specialist or priest is called as Lama. The Mechukha is extremely cold climate, so they made the dresses in conformity with the climatic condition. To get rid of cold they made and use such dresses, which give them warm and comfort. When there was not much contact with people of other region in earlier day, they utilized the fur of the animals like, sheep and yak. At present, the utility of cotton and synthetic wool are increasing in the area due to availability of raw materials which are cheaper than those of animal fur or wool of sheep.

The traditional religious specialist called Lama does the traditional treatments of the diseases. When there are any diseases or the inauspicious things are occur they consult the Lama for perform ritual. The Mamba people believe that Lama can treat any diseases by chanting the reading the sacred book. In Mamba society, it is also found that certain plants and animal parts are directly uses as medicine to treat various diseases.

The Membas also accepted the modern tools and materials for improving agricultural productions. Traditionally, cultivation done for their subsistence, but now surplus production of agricultural field and even products of kitchen garden is sold in market to earn some cash.

Traditionally, the domestication of the animal was very important and these are used as items for exchange in marriage, for the production of milk, for domestic purpose and also used for paying penalty to negotiate guilt. Now the domestication
becomes an important resource to earn some cash. Their milk is also sold in market. These domestic animals are slaughtered to sell in market and even the domestic animals are directly sold in the market to earn money. After introducing the money as a medium of exchange, money plays a significant role in their livelihood. Due to increase of education and more extension of urban centre in Mechuka, they interact with more outsiders and now Membas are very conscious of the value of money to meet their livelihood strategies. New generation prefers the modern dresses, ornaments, vehicles, mobile phones and other modern ways of livelihood. Therefore, they started moving from traditional way to the modern way of livelihood pattern.

The cases like theft, assaults, burglary, trespass, adultery, land disputes, etc. are solved at the village level. With the help of village council, if guilty person is not satisfied with decision given by village council he or she may registers the case at the police station for further investigation.

The Mamba people are rearing different types of animals, such as, cow, pig, goat, fowl, horse, sheep, goda. Goda is the most important domestic animal of Mamba people. Goda is main animals where from they produced milk. Goda is cross breeding of cow, mithun and yak. Variety of goda, are timin, garmin, shore, and balang. The milk of shore is containing very high amount of fat. Timin is yield more milk than other crossing animals (garmin, shore and zhoom). Life span of this animal and quality of milk yield is more as compare to above other animals. However, the milk yield of balang is less as compare to other above mention animals and its milk contain very less amount of fat. The domestication of animal is
very helpful in this extremely climate condition like Mechuka valley, because meat of animal is good source of protein and fats. Milk products are the most important food item of the Momba people living in high altitude area.

After introducing the money as the medium of exchange, money plays a significant role in their livelihood. Due to advancement of education and more extension of urban centre in Mechukha, Membas interact more with the outsiders and are very conscious of the value of money in their livelihood systems. So gradually, they are moving away from traditional way of livelihood pattern in the onward march of modernization, which is true in the context of whole Arunachal Pradesh. In response to such transition, the Membas are also trying to negotiate with the emerging realities for an effective utilization as well as management of their available mountain resources to sustain their livelihood pattern.