CHAPTER III

LAND AND THE PEOPLE

The present study is concerned only with the affected areas of the Doyang Dam Project. Though the Doyang is an important river of the state of Nagaland, the study focuses only on the district of Wokha where the dam and the affected land falls. This chapter deals at length the socio-economic background of the people of the Doyang Dam area in Wokha district.

Geographical Location of Wokha District

Wokha district, the home of the Lothas is situated in the mid-west part of the state of Nagaland and adjoins the Sibsagar plains of Assam on the west. Topographically, Wokha district is bounded by Mokokchung district on the north, Zunheboto district on the east and Kohima district on the south, while on the west side is the Assam plains. The district is intercepted at the heart by latitude 26°8' N and longitude 94°18' E.¹ Its total area is 1,62,800 Sq. Kms. inhabited by a population of 82,612 with a density of population at 51 per Sq. Kms.² The district is characterised by three ranges of hills running from north-east to south-west known as upper, middle and lower range. Quite interestingly, the river Doyang which is the biggest and also the longest river in Nagaland state flows through the middle of the district crossing all the ranges.
Climate

The general climatic condition of Wokha district indicates cold winter and warm summer. The winter season from December to February is the coldest season and the summer from July to September is the hottest part of the year. The altitude of the district varies from place to place and has wide differences. For example, the average altitude of Wokha area in upper range is 1314 metres, while Baghty area in lower range has one of the lowest in the state at 305 metres only above the sea level. Similarly, these two ranges have the extreme climatic conditions, where the whole lower range area bordering Assam enjoys hot climate same as Assam, the upper range enjoys the same climatic condition with that of Kohima which is 1,444 metre above sea level. The river Doyang is located between these two climatic ranges. Taking these two extreme climatic regions into consideration, the average summer temperature in the district is approximately recorded at 27°C (80°F) and does not rise beyond 32°C (90°F). At night the winter temperature comes down to as low as 4 to 2°C. The average humidity during summer is 85 percent which goes sometimes up to 95 percent to 100 percent. Thus the climatic condition of the district generally reveals particularly two seasons, cold winter and hot rainy summer, which dominate the year while spring and autumn are only nominal and short lived.

Rainfall

The average rainfall in the district is recorded at 2000 mm (80"), and it falls for about six months of the year with greatest concentration in July and August. At this climate, since the evaporation is low, the amount of rainfall should have been
quite sufficient for keeping the vegetation green throughout the year. But it is not so, because due to terrain condition of the region there is less retention of water by the soil, and also the plants cannot stand the cold in winter. Therefore, Wokha district consists of mixed vegetation of evergreen and deciduous trees and plants.

**Background of the People**

With the introduction of Christianity in Lotha area some hundred years ago and subsequent establishment of Churches, the number of Christian increased dramatically over the years, and today the whole of Lotha region has been christianised. And although there has been a total departure from the old traditional religious beliefs, practices and rituals, the old socio-economic life of the people has not changed much. Therefore, we shall be dealing with a mixed type of socio-economic condition of the people in which we find both traditional and modern systems mingle together in the activities of the people. By socio-economic background we mean the present socio-economic life of the people of our concern that is, the affected villages of the Doyang Dam project area in Wokha district of Nagaland State. But before we move on to the discussion of the present scenario let us briefly discuss the traditional aspects of socio-economic condition of the people.

The economic activities that was prevailing in the Lotha area when the British found them gives an insight into the pre-British economy. As the other Naga tribes, Lotha were in the stage of primitive economy with agriculture being the main activities for their livelihood when the British found them. However, though simple it
may seem, such agricultural activities have been providing them enough for their subsistence. Therefore, by and large, they are self sufficient and independent for their basic needs. Besides this, Lothas are said to maintain some sort of trade relations with the neighbouring Assam. According to Allen, most of the Nagas have sufficient of food and clothing, but there is little accumulated capital, and some villagers are said to experience difficulty in raising the very moderate revenue imposed on them. Apart from cotton, chillies and pan exported to Golaghat, there is nothing grown for sale, and cash is generally obtained by working for the Public Works Department, and occasionally on the garden in wintertime. The cash expenditure of the people is, however, very small, and generally they seem fairly well to do. Surely, Allen was also talking about the Lothas as they are nearest to Golaghat among the other Naga tribes. It is also a fact that the Lothas had such trading relationship with the people of Assam of Golaghat area even during and after Nagaland attained statehood, which also confirms the observation of Allen. However, agricultural activities have remained the main economic activity till today.

Piketo Sema has rightly observed that “the people were largely engaged in agriculture. The means of production were decentralised and therefore, the relation of dependence was not created within the system of production. Their household economy was self contained, and the foodgrain produced was largely consumed at home. However, the productivity in agrarian sector was low and production was not sufficient to build stocks, and thus the economy remained fragile. Save for occasional exchanges, the tendency was to produce for the direct consumption of the producers.
Surpluses were exchanged between groups or members of the groups. Control of the means of production and labour was exercised by the producers themselves, and exchange was an exchange of labour and its products. Everyone worked for an immediate need and that was all. Thus, the pre-colonial economy had not progressed appreciably from the subsistence level.\(^9\)

Such was the economic life of the Lothas in the pre-British era. And although agriculture remained their main occupation, they were also engaged in all sorts of handicrafts for their domestic use. An interesting part in such activities was that there was no separate artisan class, but everybody made baskets, mats, wooden plates and other domestic articles according to their requirements. While men folk engaged themselves in handicrafts, women folk engaged themselves in spinning cotton into threads and weaving clothes for the family. Money, however, was not used in the pre-British period and thus, barter system was the only medium of exchange in their economic activities. The use of money was introduced only during the British period. As Piketo Sema has further noted, “the use of money as a medium of exchange was introduced only by the colonial administration and hence, there was no significant monetised system of trade in the pre-British period”.\(^10\) However, it is generally observed that as the process of colonisation intensified, there was a drastic progress in the activities of the people. Otherwise earlier it was the practice that many able bodied men had to guard villages and fields for security reasons. However, with the dawn of peace, Nagas could settle down to peaceful agricultural production.\(^11\)
During the later stage, as the activities of the colonial administration got deep rooted in the land of the Lothas, significant changes took place on the overall outlook of the people. Particularly due to the spread of Christianity and modern education and also the administrative development of the area, their condition of life improved. They were now ready to serve as teachers, pastors and office assistants of the British administration without any suspicion, fear and prejudice. Similarly, there was also gradual replacement of their dresses and household utensils with the modern ones. They started using half pants, shirts, long pants, hats, peti-coats and woolen clothes, etc., household items of wooden crafts and pottery were replaced by steel utensils. Many more foreign items started to be introduced to the people which drastically changed their life-style. The introduction of money had a great impact on the socio-economic life of the people. Money became one of the most commanding agencies in the socio-economic status of the people otherwise it was regarded as insignificant in the pre-British era. Introduction of money helped the people to start trading with the neighbouring Assam in a more easy and systematic way. However, even during the early British rule, it was observed that it was not money but the number of granaries, cattles and the amount of land owned by individuals which remained the major determinants of the social and economic status for the Lothas.

However, even with so much changes in the spheres of education, religion and politics, the socio-economic life of the Lotha village community has remained to be land and forest based. Land and forest products have remained the mainstay of their life.
SOCIAL LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

Land Tenure

An important aspect of social life of the people of our concern is, first, the land holding system. From the time immemorial every village owned a sizeable portion of land. It was at first owned collectively by the villagers who when settling down in the new village carved out land from the surrounding areas. Most of the villages have had their boundary demarcated by natural barriers such as, course of a river, hills and ravine, etc. The village land acquired collectively by different clans is divided among the clans and it is again divided among the families. In every village there is village land and clan land. The village land is generally for community use. The clan land is either distributed or kept undivided, but are used almost every year for cultivation purposes. Besides clan, an individual or a family may possess private land and property inherited from their forefathers who had it by dint of chivalric deeds or has received as a gift from others or purchased it.\textsuperscript{13} Whatever may be the original land tenure system, as a result of impact of modern civilisation and growth of monetary economy, the system has changed considerably. The community land holding system is still in existence though only in a small way to hold the members of the clan together. The present land holding system of the people of our concern has changed dramatically into private and family holdings. The system may thus be grouped into the following categories.
1. *Village Land*

Village land is owned jointly by the entire village. It is also known as village reserve. Today we find only a very small area of such land. In some villages such land surrounds the village and some such land is reserved in a far away place from the village. Such system and land wherever it is kept though in a small way, holds the members of the village together.

2. *Clan Land*

Clan land is owned jointly by the members of the clan. Originally, a large portion of land was held in common by all members of the particular clan in the village. However, such common land holding system is breaking up at a very fast rate today. As B.B. Ghosh has observed “it is unfortunate that this old system of land ownership by clan and families is breaking up yielding more to the individuals claim for private ownership”.

3. *Private Land*

The most important of all is *Private Land*. It could also be referred to as family land. It passes from father to sons and sons to grandsons and so on. If the heirs are many it goes on dividing and sub-dividing the land itself.

It may be noted that as far as dispossession of land is concerned, the Lotha tradition has it that whether it is community land or private and individual land, leasing out permanently or selling it to an outsider is strictly prohibited. It is rightly
observed that “if the heirs are less and the land is more and a great portion of the land has remains unused, the legitimate joint holders may agree to lease a portion of it, but in no case the land can be disposed off permanently. Any individual holder may sell his share but not outside the village”. It is found that such a rigid system of land ownership is claimed to be prevalent even today. However, a closer look into the system shows that such a tradition of land ownership by community and disposition of land has no meaning today since the ownership of land has shifted more to the private individuals breaking the age-old tradition. Thus, making the land holding into smaller holdings and to top it all, the small holdings are scattered over wide areas and uneven terrain.

Land Use Pattern

The land thus owned by the village, clan, family and individuals is used for cultivation purposes. The main form of cultivation is jhum, which means shifting cultivation. Under jhum, the selected area for cultivation is cleared of its shrubs and undergrowth and kept lying on the ground for several months to dry up, and fire is set when it is dried in the month of February and March every year. From this time of the year people are wholly engaged in their fields till the harvest is over in the month of September and October. After a day or two the field which is burnt is cleared off the unburnt and half burnt logs and twigs. Unburnt logs are purposely placed orderly in the field in such a way that the loose earth cannot be washed away by rain water, thus preventing erosion of the earth, as a result of which the crops grow better on immediate upper side of the log-step. The soil is generally boggy and loose in many
parts of the district and therefore, the crops grow luxuriantly even without tilling the earth. However, the tilling of the land is practised in some parts of upper range but the middle and lower ranges do not till the land. Sowing is done by putting the seeds in a hole made by the hoe. The paddy is sown in the month of March and April. Nearly after a month of sowing the seeds, the weeding is done two or three times till the plants are fully grown and ripens ready for harvesting.

Jhumming is performed more than once in a particular place if the same is sufficiently fertile, and then is kept fallow for the next seven to ten years depending on the fertility of the land and availability of other land for cultivation, after which the same is cultivated again. Under jhum vegetables and many other different crops are grown together with paddy. It has been observed that due to the tribal tendency for self-dependence, a large number of crops is grown in the same field.\textsuperscript{17} This system of mixed cropping ensures the best utilisation of solar energy and also keeps a check on the spread of disease and pest menace.\textsuperscript{18} The system, however, may not give good output but it at least provides people self-sufficiency in food. And therefore, with non-feasibility of the other system of cultivation due to the condition of terrain and also the jhum system which has been well integrated into the very custom and tradition of the people the present system still continues to be the main source of livelihood.

Besides jhum, there is also other form of cultivation in Doyang valley where bullock or buffalo drawn plough is used for wet rice cultivation as in the plains of Assam. Though the exact area under such cultivation is not known, the whole plain
areas of Doyang is suitable for such cultivation and has well developed into permanent rice cultivation. This is the only form of cultivation other than jhumming practised by the people of the area. This is also the only plain area in the affected region suitable for such a cultivation.

Horticulture and fruit farming is another area of cultivation which is very popular in the district. The climatic condition of the area is congenial for fruit farming. Orange, banana, pineapple, etc. are cash crops and are produced by many villages in Lotha area. It is grown in homestead garden, but some families keep good orchards particularly in the valleys and slopes of Doyang river. Mention may be made of the most important villages which produce them on commercial basis. They are Pagti, Changsu, Yikhum, Sanis and Riphyim. These villages produce orange, banana and pineapple on a large scale. Besides, mention also may be made of lemon, pears and papaya, which are grown abundantly.

Besides nowadays land is also used for tree plantation, which is popularly practised on a large scale by the people particularly in the slopes of Doyang valley which of course will be discussed at length in the subsequent chapters.

Property and Inheritance

Coupled with the land tenure and land use pattern is the customary practices of inheritance. The customary practice of inheritance among the Lothas follows male line and therefore, women are not entitled to inherit immovable property of the parents.
Women are presented with gifts in the form of cash, paddy, ornaments and clothings etc. on their marriage. Among the Lothas the youngest son is entitled to a lion’s share of the parental properties in terms of granaries, cash and other movable properties. However, land is shared equally by all the brothers. By tradition, elder brothers usually get married first and establish their own dwelling places and live separately from the parents. Therefore, the youngest son inherits the parental house even before the parents are dead. This ensures the responsibility of looking after the old parents by the youngest son.

**Hunting and Fishing**

Another area of the social life of the people is hunting and fishing. Hunting and fishing are carried out for both economic needs and for preservation and strengthening of custom and tradition of the people. Such activities involve certain socio-economic and cultural implications, and therefore, they are a part of their way of life. They are performed ceremoniously with great festivity.

**Hunting**

The people hunt and kill wild animals individually and corporately. Their hunting game consists of wild cats, wild boars, bears, deers, tigers, and birds of all kinds. Individually they hunt wild animals and birds through certain traps and snares. But the most important kind of this game is done corporately in which the people surround the hunting ground by picketing and shouting a war cry, where a circle or a triangle or any shape according to their convenience is formed. And when the animal
comes out it is speared from all sides and is thus killed. Sometimes when the animal is in a cave, dogs are used and sometimes they smoke the cave so that the animal rushes out and thus killed. In a bigger game when a large animal like leopard or tiger is involved a large number of people are required, under such circumstances the participation of the neighbouring villages is sought. Of course, today with the introduction of gun culture hunting has become easy. However, the old system of corporate hunting still continues. Of course, now it is done in a more organised way with gun as the main weapon.

**Fishing**

Like hunting fishing is undertaken both individually and corporately. The members of the village, a khel or a group of people go to the rivers and take on the expedition ceremoniously. Fishing is usually done in lean seasons when the water is less. The most important method of catching fish is by poisoning the water by a kind of poisonous stems and roots of a plant which is collected from the jungle. The bundle of stems on roots are then trashed and mixed with water. And when the water is polluted by this poisonous juice the fishes become stupified and float on water and are caught easily. There is another way of catching fish by diverting the course of the river. They also catch fish and crabs by hand by groping under the stones and holes. Fishing net and rods are also used to catch fishes. Besides, bamboo baskets of different sizes are placed in the course of the fish for the purpose of catching it. The baskets are woven in such a way that once the fish gets inside cannot come out.
Hunting and fishing are therefore, important activities in the social life of the people. The social implication of such collective activities like hunting and fishing is that it helps in strengthening the harmonious existence and the unity among the various clans of the village. Culturally, it helps in the maintenance and preservation of custom and tradition of the society. Hunting and fishing grounds are training grounds for younger generation to learn certain traditional values like bravery, courage, beliefs, norms and ritualistic behaviour of the society apart from the ability of physical strength. A good hunter is regarded as the ablest man in the village and he occupies higher social status among fellow villagers. However, the game of hunting and fishing requires a large forest area and good rivers which are unfortunately rarely found today due to the intrusion of modern civilisation into the wild habitation of nature.

**Food Habit**

Food and drinking is another area for the understanding of social life of the people. Lothas are rice eaters and thus is their main staple food. They also take plenty of meat specially pork and beef. Pork in fact, is a ceremonial food which is the main dish in all festivals. They also take fish of both types fresh and dried ones. They take worms and reptiles from snails to snakes though occasionally. As B.D. Sharma and D.K. Hore, talking about the tribals of north-east, have observed that “their peculiar food habits have urged them to grow or gather plants accordingly. They have been collecting edible plants from adjoining forests while visiting their jhum cultivations”. And true to such observation, the Lothas take a lot of fresh vegetables and roots of both domesticated and wild ones directly from the forest. Lothas are well known for
taking plenty of chillies and bamboo shoots. These two items are found to be present in every preparation of curry. Rice and curry are prepared separately. Their dish is very simple as their life-styles. Curry is prepared simply with chillies, bamboo shoots, salt and dry fish boiling it along with vegetables with water for half an hour and it is ready to be relished. The people have sufficient paddy and rice is prepared with water only. Except for few people, there is no change in food habit till today.

Among the beverages, tea is widely relished. Though milk is special one, it is not found easily since rearing of cows and buffaloes is almost nil among the people. However, rice bear (a local intoxicant) is widely used. Now a days company made liquors is abundantly available and is used by many people of this area.

**People’s Organisations**

Another area of the social life of the people is the existence of various organisations actively functioning in these villages such as Village Council, Village Development Board (VDB), Church and Students’ Union etc.

**Village Council (Traditional)**

Traditionally, every Lotha village was an independent village republic having a government run by the council of elders called ‘TONGTI’. These elders were drawn from every khel and clan of the village. They were responsible for maintaining law and order and dispensing justice. Apart from their normal duty they also looked after the welfare activities of the village, festivals and ceremonies. It is interesting to note
that the colonial administration of the British left this traditional institution untouched. As Piketo Sema has observed, the government readily used the existing institutions based on local customs and tradition. It made no attempt to introduce any measure based on alien concepts. By recognising the traditional leaders and elders as Chiefs and Gaon Buras they tried to integrate the existing leadership into the colonial administrative framework. This system of administration was uniform all over the district. Thus, the structure of district administration left the Nagas with no direct weight of alien rule; British rule did not in any way seriously affect the basic social structure of the Nagas, it remained traditional in character and content. This system ensured social continuity and at the same time facilitated the acceptance of British rule.  

**Village Council (Present)**

The system still continues to this day though with certain changes due to the introduction of ‘three tier’ system of local self government after independence. And today, the institution of TONGTI is called ‘Village Council’ and the elders simply ‘members’ headed by the Village Chairman. Today, besides the Gaon Buras, who are selected by the respective khel and clan and appointed by the government, there are Village Council Members (VCM) who are directly elected by the respective khels and clans and the same is approved by the government. The institution acts as a link between the villagers and the government. Hence, the present day Village Council has far-reaching responsibilities in the maintenance of law and order, dispensing justice and supervising and proposing various welfare activities for the village.
Village Development Board (VDB)

Related to the institution of Village Council is the Village Development Board (VDB). Like Village Council Members, the VDB members are elected by the respective khell and clan and a Secretary is selected from amongst them to head the Board. However, it is not an Autonomous Board but it has to function in co-ordination with the Village Council, and together they carry out all developmental activities, propose and prepare the various welfare schemes of the village – the proposal of which is scrutinised by the government and approval is accorded within the budgetary allocation of Rs. 750.00 per household of the village. The government also advances loans and grant-in-aid to the Board. Such budgetary allocation however, is limited to petty activities like, construction of footpaths, drainage, wells and water tanks etc. nevertheless, this has brought some improvement of the dwelling places of the village.

Church and Students’ Union

The next organisation that is found active in the villages is the Church and Students’ Union. It is observed that the whole area is being christianised and the Church organisations are not only concerned with the spiritual life of the people, but are also actively involved in various social activities of the village such as, campaigning for self-reliance and against social evils etc. The students are also actively involved in the welfare activities of the village and if assigned with, they also take up all sorts of issues concerning the welfare of the village from socio-economic, cultural and religious to even politics.
Besides such organisations, we also find Youth and Sports Clubs actively functioning in the villages. Interestingly, a person is a member of many of these groups. Therefore, the villagers apart from their normal household activities and cultivation do participate in many other social activities of the village which not only enrich their personalities but also strengthen their social life and unity as well. Though the villages have various clans and social organisations, they live as one family sharing everybody's suffering and happiness.

ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

Wokha district lies in the western part of Nagaland bordering the plains of Assam. Therefore, even when the whole of the then Naga Hills remained in isolation, some people of this district carried on trade on barter system with the plain people. But this kind of trading was never on a large scale effecting the economic life of the area. It was not felt much as the people were more or less self-sufficient and their dependence on the plain market was limited only to certain things particularly salt. But now a days due to the influence of modern civilisation the needs of the people have become numerous which are brought in from the plains, thus increasing the activities of trading with the plains. However, majority of the people are still cultivators and cultivation is the main source for their livelihood. It is true that even those people who are employed in government service or engaged in business and other vocations, cultivate the land though they are not fully dependent on it like the cultivators. These people hire the labourers on daily wage for cultivating the land. The economic life of
Livelihood Pattern

The main source of income is cultivation and as mentioned earlier, the main form of cultivation is jhumming. However, the nature of terrain has several limitations on the scale of productive activities under jhum cultivation and avenues for other infrastructural facilities. It is observed that under such conditions, “survival at subsistence level is the order and main pre-occupation of the people”. As mentioned, cultivation is main source of livelihood, and though the density of population may be low, the pressure on land is very high as the net sown area is very low. Further, the land holdings are small and are scattered over the wide area. Since the sown area is low the per-capita availability of land for cultivation is also quite low, hence the low production. For example, production under jhum is only 865 Kgs per hectare, while under terrace it is 1150 Kgs per hectare. However, though terrace cultivation is more advantageous, due to the condition of terrain and non-availability of good land for cultivation, it is not widely practised. On the other hand, jhum cultivation due to its suitability and simplicity of technology is more conveniently and successfully done.

A closer look at the activities of the people thus shows that they are completely dependent on agriculture and are fully engaged in cultivation throughout the year till harvest is over. However, during the slack seasons they do some side work like petty business and handicrafts. Household industries like carpentry, blacksmithy and
handicrafts are undertaken by everyone. While men folk are engaged in earning money, women folk are engaged in weaving shawls for the entire family and collecting fire wood for the whole year. Most men go outside the village in search of daily wage work since work is rarely available in the village. In fact, in the olden days men folk used to go as far as Assam in search of manual work in tea garden and some construction work particularly road construction. Of course, people don’t go to Assam now in search of work. The winter season between the harvest and jungle clearing for the next cultivation is the time people are usually engaged in earning money. It may be noted that the villagers are self-sufficient in food-grain and therefore, whatever money they earn is utilised for buying other essential items like salt, clothes, dry fish and tea leaves etc. and stock them for the whole year, and surplus if generated is kept for buying meat. It may be noted that the tribals are never dependent entirely on plant food sources but they are engaged in hunting wild beast and fishing. They also rear animals such as pigs, poultry, birds, goats, cows and dogs, etc. for using them as meat. Like any other backward areas, these villagers are also believed to be suffering from the lack of investment opportunities. It is found that due to the subsistence economy, the level of per-capita income in the village is low, the level of saving is also low because the small income is soon eaten up. And since investment must be financed out of saving, the rate of accumulation of capital is also low. Thus the growth of output is outstripped by the sharp growth of population.

Therefore, when we examine closely the simple life of these villagers, we understand that their simple socio-economic life is completely dependent on land,
forest and natural resources. For these people land and forest mean everything. It is the only property they own. It provides rich vegetation for food, woods for fuel and timbers for their houses and day to day needs. Even today, these villagers depend on nature for their existence since no modern commercial activities has been possible. There are a few government job-holders employed as teachers in primary schools whose lifestyles and habits remain as those of the cultivators. The villagers, therefore, live in association with nature and nature provides them all their needs, and even their songs and prayers are provided and inspired by nature. In other words, their custom and tradition rather culture is the outcome of their association with nature. Therefore, destruction of their land and forest is actually destruction of not only their habitats but invasion to their cultural moorings.

Living Standard

As mentioned, it is generally observed that the living condition of the people has greatly improved in the recent years due to the influence of modern education and civilisation. Many educated people from these villages have entered into various government services or contract work and have migrated to the towns and urban areas. It is observed that as more educated persons are coming out from the villages such a process of migration by the educated in search of better avenues will be a continuous process. However, the improvement in the living standard in the towns does not in any way affect the economy of the poor villagers. Hence the old economic system still continues in the villages and the general standard of living of the people remains where it was.
By standard of living of the people we generally refer to economic condition of the people. Thus, it denotes the present way of living of an individual or a family. But the standard of living of the people varies from one family to another, so are their necessities, luxuries and comforts. Basing on the standard of living of the people we identify three groups of people in the villages today.

(a) The Cultivators: The cultivators are entirely dependent on cultivation for their livelihood. They live in thatched houses and lead a very simple life. Generally, half of the floor of the room is plastered with mud where lies the oven for cooking purposes. Members of the family as well as visitors generally sit around the fireplace. The walls are also made of bamboo mat. Their only income is through cultivation and are the poorest in the village constituting more than 80 percent of the village population.

(b) People of the second group are those who have other sources of income besides cultivation. They do not only cultivate land but do some business and other works of profit like carpentry, handicrafts and weaving and small time shopowners, who sell some essential items. Naturally the economic condition of this group is better than those of the cultivators. With their extra incomes they even send their children to better schools in the nearby town like Wokha.

(c) The third group of people we find in the villages are those of the government service holders such as primary teachers, carpentry and weaving instructors and
Dobhasis etc. They live in the village itself and carry on cultivation along with other work. Their living condition and financial position are thus better than the other groups. And though they live in the village they live in improved houses. Many people of this group have tin roofed houses and their dress and food habits are much better than the others. Their presence in the village is also a great help to the villagers both economically and otherwise. They are also regarded as knowledgeable persons whose advice and help in the village administration and other social activities are indispensable and have far reaching impact on the life of the village community. Side by side with their secured jobs they too cultivate land.

However one thing which is common in all these groups is the continuation of traditional profession of cultivation. The business group and government jobholders whose economic condition is well-secured still continue with cultivation. Therefore, though the whole area is being Christianised and there has been a total departure from the old religious customs, beliefs and practices, the agrarian social structure and economy of the people have not changed substantially. Therefore, even today, the villagers are entirely dependent on cultivation for their livelihood. They live in the villages and lead a very simple life unlike those living in the towns. They are generally poor but not below poverty line. A Lotha family does not supply or sell its products to others but is able to maintain the family. Therefore they live a better life than their counterparts in the rest of India. This has been possible because they have sufficient land for cultivation and everyone is employed in productive activities. There is no beggar nor any landless labourers. However, today the problems of the villagers are
more acute than ever, because with the rapid growth of population the number of family members has sharply increased. Thus with no avenues other than cultivation, and with the same size of land as before with lesser fertility and yields, now they have to feed more mouths. The unemployment problem is also very acute adding more and more unproductive consumers in the society.

**New Trend**

Besides these groups, we also find a new group that is dangerously emerging today disturbing the simple and peaceful existence of village community life. We may name this as 'unproductive consumer', consisting of the unemployed youths who simply loiter around aimlessly without participating in any productive activities of the family. They simply depend for all their needs on the sweats of their parents. Adding more fuel to the fire, most of these youths jump into the wagon of alcoholism, drug addiction and thefts, etc. Almost 90 percent of more than one hundred villagers interviewed opined that such social menace which was otherwise unknown fifteen years ago is sweeping the villages today. They unhesitatingly attribute the causes of all these evils to the large circulation of money caused by the compensation paid to the villagers and the beginning of construction works of the project which resulted in creating more work for the daily wage earners through the petty local contractors. Secondly, it is because of the unemployment problem which is sharply increasing, failing to get hold of suitable job, the youths get frustrated and indulge in all kinds of social evils which ultimately destroy both their lives and the peaceful existence of the society.
The impact of modern civilisation has also its effects even in the remotest village in the district. The old dictum of these people living in isolation has no meaning today. They accept the lifestyles of what the modern civilisation could offer them with open arms. Gone are the days of superstition and isolation, they are rather more exposed to the modern patterns of life. Today the villagers have water tanks, medical sub-centres, primary educational institutions, approach roads to the villages, though only seasonal, and electricity with modern appliances. It is therefore, generally observed that some visible changes have taken place in the recent years, and side by side with these changes, the cost of living for the villagers has increased manifold due to the unending needs of modern amenities.

A Lotha family is an independent unit consisting of husband, wife and the children. Average member in a family is as high as seven to eight members including the parents. Therefore, considering the basic requirements of all the members, the average monthly consumption of a family has gone up much inproportion to the income. Though the exact figures of their income and expenditure cannot be worked out due to irregularity in the availability of work in the villages and also because of unassessed expenditure by the people, the average monthly consumption of a lower income family, that is the cultivators, is roughly assessed anywhere between Rs. 3000.00 to Rs. 4000.00 excluding food-grains and vegetables. Whereas their monthly income from all sources is estimated at as low as Rs. 2000.00 to Rs. 1000.00 only. According to the villagers, the larger part of their income is spent on their children’s education.
As have been discussed, the present day socio-economic life of the villagers is quite distressing. Surprisingly not a single village of our concern is connected with the State Transport Networks. Of course, there are approach and link roads leading to the villages but they are only seasonal. Thus, the village shopowners and the villagers who produce fruits and vegetables on commercial basis have to carry their loads on their heads walking all the way to the markets and from the markets to the village. This is the reason why we don’t find any commercial activity in the villages. Although educationally every village is much better off today with the literacy rate of the district at 73.92 percent, this has also added much socio-economic problems to the villagers. As more educated people are coming out, the members of educated unemployed and unproductive consumers are increasing. Such a situation has caused the emergence of a new phase of socio-economic problems known as the phase of ‘alcoholism, drug addiction and theft’ which threatens the very existence of the society. The problem of population explosion in these villages is also very high with the growth rate of 43.47 percent of the district according to the 1991 Census. This has created space problem in the villages. Although the educated people are migrating from villages to the towns, the impact is only marginal and it does not help to solve the socio-economic problem of the villagers. Adding to this, the educated people who have migrated to the towns and whose income is much better does not in any way help the poor villagers in improving their socio-economic conditions.

A village is a close knit community. Every activity from economic and recreational to religious and cultural is collectively organised. The village folk draws
inspiration and resources directly from the nature to strengthen their socio-cultural and economic life. Their inspiration, courage and happiness are the outcome of their cordial association with nature. Therefore, they own the nature as a collective source of their life. Such collectivity is their unity and strength, and every activity is a festivity. In short, this collectivity of activities is their social fabric and centre of life’s existence. Therefore, the emergence of any unwanted elements into their social and economic life is an intrusion into the very social fabric of collectivity and leads to the destruction of their social, economic, religious and cultural life.
References


4. Ibid., p. 41.


9. Ibid., p. 132.

10. Ibid., p. 133.

11. Ibid., p. 133.


15. Ibid., pp. 62-63.


18. Ibid., p. 74.

19. Ibid., p. 73.


24. The rate of average monthly consumption and that of the income are not accurate. They are just a rough estimation made after a series of interviews in the seven most affected villagers.


26. Ibid., p. 44.