CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to examine the socio-economic and environmental consequences of the Doyang Dam Project in the district of Wokha in the state of Nagaland. This question has been examined within the broader framework of debates on dam building across the world and also in the context of Indian situation. This enquiry has focussed its attention on the history of the launching of Doyang Dam and so also the socio-economic context in which the project has been undertaken.

The study has collected data both from primary and secondary sources. Primary materials were collected through structured interview of the affected and unaffected villagers of the area and through the depth interview of some selected people comprising local leaders, opinion builders, government officials and employees of the project. The secondary sources of information primarily included the government reports and records, documents of the project authorities, State Assembly debates, speeches of the important personalities of the region and numerous published books, magazines and journals.
The study clearly suggests that there has been serious debates on the impact of
dam and reservoir in the life of the common people in different parts of the world. In
India this debate gets special attention in the present decade of the century in the
context of the Sardar Sarovar Project on Narmada. The debate on Narmada Dam has
not only generated controversies in recent times but the debates associated with it has
raised numerous questions concerning the developmental dimension of such big dams.
In fact, the people's movement which emerged in the wake of this debate has shaken
the very thinking concerning the utility of large dams in this part of the world. It was in
this context that the present study has attempted to examine the impact of a middle
size dam on the people of an area which has been a very backward region inhabited by
the tribals in the North Eastern part of India.

The losses of land, forest, rivers and material wealth of the area to the project
have created numerous social problems. The most striking one is the emergence of
landlessness and marginal landholders. In a backward tribal community like the
present one where land is considered to be a symbol of socio-economic status, such a
phenomenon has a great impact on the social structure of the community. Thus, we
find breaking up of the most valuable possessions of the people 'the social solidarity
and cohesion' in the family, village and community they once maintained, resulting
into various unwanted social problems. This has led to a new social order
characterised by complicities created by problems like displacement, poverty and
indebtedness. Some sort of internal differentiation in terms of landed and landless, rich
and the poor has been brought about in the community. Therefore, integrational
aspects of the community has been disturbed to the extent of breaking up of more families due to the reasons cited. In this process the characteristics of the idea of 'community life' such as unity, integration and social cohesiveness have been substantially lost leading to a serious socio-cultural implication for the society. This has also caused the loss of traditional values and norms which once ruled people's life. The corporate activities which formed the main organ of community life are threatened with extinction making people more individualist. All told, the community sentiment and the we-feeling which formed the basis of the Lotha social structure are being eroded threatening the very identity of the people.

The most striking fact is that the affected people themselves are not aware of how the consequences of the project are affecting their social life. They seem to be quite confused and ignorant about the changes that are taking place at a very fast rate than expected. Much changes have taken place since the launching of the project in 1983. They seemed to be alright when the compensation was paid to them which changed their lifestyle, but before they could realise what was happening to them, they became landless and poor. Money has gone as sudden as it came and they have become poor and desperate. They spent lavishly without thinking any new avenues of livelihood.

Another visible impact of the project is the breaking down of the village social solidarity in the affected areas. In the Lotha villages, the amount of land and number of granaries one owns is still the determining factor of one's socio-economic status.
Those who own them become the most powerful and influential person in the village. On the other hand, the landless and the dependent people are regarded as insignificant and looked down upon. Though not as harsh as before, this practice is still evident and the poor and the landless are not given much importance in the affairs of the village. Now it is observed that as the process of land alienation intensifies in the villages the system of subjugation of the landless and the poor will be perpetuated in a more aggravated form than before. It is feared that a situation may even arise when the landless and the less privileged people may not be regarded as a true citizen of the village if land is taken as a determining factor of the village membership, thus, resulting into identity crisis for the landless people.

The consequences of the project have also led to a serious economic set back to the affected people as they are largely dependent on land, forest and the river for their sustenance. The loss of the plain and slope areas where once the settled cultivation with irrigational facility, orchards and plantation of timber had flourished, has brought havoc to the economic life of the people. This phenomenon is bringing people back to the jhumming as they have lost their wetland, putting more pressure on the jhum land.

Another domain of economic concern is the emergence of a large number of dependent families as a result of land acquisition and the inability of the project authority to provide jobs to the people. This has created acute unemployment problem further aggravating dependency among the affected people of the area. Consequently, it has disturbed the whole livelihood pattern of the people creating more unanticipated
problems. Besides, it is observed that these people are also suffering because of the lack of investment opportunity as no commercial activities worth investing are found in the area. Though some have invested in land and property with the compensation money but they are unable to cope up with the existing economic condition and are reselling their land again. On the other hand, no saving was made as they thought that the flow of money will not end.

Despite all these socio-economic problems created by the construction of the dam there are no relief and rehabilitation programmes for the affected people. Any dam project of such a dimension should have carried with it rehabilitation programmes as problems to be created in the wake of dam construction is too obvious. Surprisingly, such an important dimension like rehabilitation is absent in the case of the Doyang Dam Project. Thus, in the absence of any rehabilitation schemes, the problems of the villagers have become more acute than ever before.

The environmental consequences of the project is also a matter of great concern. Land and forest which have been acquired will be submerged by water. The digging of earth is causing erosion and frequent landslides further destroying cultivable land. Forests have been systematically destroyed and are threatened with extinction of various species of flora and fauna. It is also observed that some kind of medicinal plants have already been destroyed and many more indigenous plants of rare species are believed to have perished even before they are discovered. Besides, the
pollution and over-exploitation of the river bed boulders in the downstream is causing life in the river inhospitable.

Moreover, due to too much pressure on land, villagers are further pushed back to the hill top for jhum cultivation and for other life sustaining activities. In the process, erosion of top soil and damage to the water shade areas have been aggravated causing serious environmental concern in the area. Jhum practices in large-scale in the upper catchment areas will also pose a serious impact on the life of the dam itself due to maximum siltation in the reservoir. The damage to the dam due to siltation will be the greatest destruction of the whole process. This problem is anticipated one because the terrain is hilly and also jhum practice is the major life sustaining activities of the people.

Thus, what we witness here is the fact that in the name of development so much destruction and suffering has been brought to the life of the affected people. A development which cannot bring peace and happiness to the people is no development. It is in this context that one can easily argue that any development schemes must have human face. Under the circumstances unless the whole process of dam construction includes the problems of the affected people the debate on socio-economic and environmental consequences will continue and the concerned authorities will finally regret for not acknowledging the problems of the affected people. Undoubtedly, the technological advancement has revolutionised our society increasing the total production of land but without the proper direction such a revolution will not be
acceptable to the poor people if their life itself is destabilised as a result of these advancements. Thus, the positive aspects of the Doyang Dam Project are recognised by us but the basic question remains how the socio-economic problems created by it are tackled. Because if such an important dimension of the project is ignored it will only bring a partial development.

Therefore, at the backdrop of so much physical and material destruction caused to the local inhabitants and the region in building large dam, the most viable alternative for hill area development is to go for mini or micro hydel projects. Because such small hydel plants are more advantageous than the large projects like Doyang Dam. First, unlike large projects, mini or micro hydel plants do not require large area of land and forest for their development and thus, have minimum affects on the local inhabitants. Secondly, unlike large projects, micro hydel plants is easy to manage. Thirdly, the cost of micro hydel project is also comparatively low and therefore, is inflation free. Finally, since it does not require large area, destruction caused to the local environment is also minimum and thus, it is environment friendly.

In a hilly region like Nagaland where other projects and commercial activities seem very costly, and owing to the availability of rich hydro potential through its streams, obviously the most viable area of development could be hydro electricity. But definitely not at the expense of our livelihood as has been demonstrated by the Doyang Dam Project. The best thing as suggested, is to go for numerous micro-hydel plants in any of the future programme if we want sustainability of development.
We would like to conclude our study by quoting from the report of the *Fourth National Power Plan, 1997-2012*. It says, "Rehabilitation of the families affected due to construction of large reservoir based hydro project is essentially a human problem and has to be dealt with understanding and sensitivity.... Similarly, studies need to be carried out at the planning stage of a project about likelihood of extinction of species on account of creation of reservoirs and submergence of area. Proper remedial measures such as provision of alternate habitation for these species, release of certain discharge downstream for providing passage to migratory fishes, etc., need to be taken on the basis of result of these studies. In fact, it is seen that hydroelectric project often get delayed resulting in time and cost overruns and at times even in abandoning due to difficulties in getting requisite clearances from environment and forest angles. There is, therefore, need to consider environment and forest aspects in greater detail, than has been hitherto, at the project inception stage itself".¹

**Reference**