CHAPTER VII

THE DATA GAP

In the light of the preceding chapters it can be hypothesized that Arunachal Pradesh contains fundamentally an agricultural community and that the agriculture is, with the exception of a few pockets, at a primitive level of development. The efforts of the Government have not been able to dent the hard cast of poverty of the people. The aim of the Government is to bring the area at par with rest of the country. This task can be achieved only through an imaginative and balanced development of agriculture.

Arunachal Pradesh has some special problems of agricultural development. Till these problems are brought into sharp focus and their stock is taken, an objective assault cannot be made on them keeping the social, cultural and economic perspective in view. Those who are responsible for the quick development of Arunachal Pradesh will have to give topmost priority to diagnose the restraints and the bottlenecks coming on the way of development of agriculture. Unless conscious efforts are made to recognise the problems and areas of strength as well as weaknesses are located, the efforts and the eco-
The extent of primitiveness of agriculture is known only through general observations or deduced from the governmental efforts and assessed through the Plan expenditure data. It is not known how much land is under cultivation. Consequently, the information on the land under cultivation per household or per capita are lacking. What and how much of different crops are produced cannot be calculated because no information exist on land utilisation pattern and the yield rates of different crops. It is not known what portion of their requirements the people grow in the fields and what portion of they continue to collect from the forests. Under the Jhum Land Regulation 1947, jungle items continue to be almost the free gifts of nature. It is yet to be properly ascertained what food the people eat and what part of it is grown in the fields and what part of it comes from the jungle. The norms of the per-capita or per household consumption are unknown. There is no data to show how much of the per-capita food grains intake is supplemented by any other diet. The only assumption regarding the intake of food grains was made...
in "The Techno-Economic Survey Report" of NCAER (Page 27) where the average intake of 510 grams per-capita per day was assumed very arbitrarily and thereupon the rest of the data on consumption were built-up.

There is no doubt that the people depend on barter economy. But it is not known what and how much they barter with. No data is available regarding the domestic marketable surplus, indebtedness, marketability of products, the items sold and purchased in markets. It is accepted that Livestock is the main medium of exchange, but it is not known what the livestock wealth is per capita and per household.

Land is considered to be the fundamental source of income, but it has not yet been cadastrally surveyed and no land records exist. The data under 11 categories i.e. (1) total reported area (2) forest (3) area not available for cultivation (4) permanent pasture and other grazing lands (5) land under miscellaneous tree crops and groves not included in area sown (6) cultivable waste lands (7) fallow lands other than current fallows (8) current fallows (9) net area sown (10) area sown more than once (11) net area irrigated by all sources, and other sub-classifications of these, as availa-
ble in other States, are not available for Arunachal Pradesh. "Though adequate facts and statistics are not available, land in the tribal areas consists generally of poor soil". A meeting of the representatives of Central Government, the Statisticians and the Directors of Agriculture of the States of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and Union Territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh was held from 21st to 23rd May, 1973 in Shillong, which recognised the special problems of lack of data on land and agricultural practices existing in the North Eastern Region and the need of collecting it was stressed. The conference had come to the conclusion that it was not possible with the resources available to collect the land utilization data as per the classification listed above. As such, it was decided that the efforts to collect data by the North Eastern Region Governments should be confined to a four fold classification i.e. (1) area under cultivation (2) cultivable lands (excluding (1) above (3) forest land and (4) others. The unsuitability of the usually accepted

1. Source: Page 3 of Planning Commission's Programme for the Scheduled Tribes issued by the office of the Adviser to the Governor of Assam, Shillong - Page - 3.
concepts, definitions and methods of such data collection as adopted in other developed States and Union Territories of the country was also taken note of. The conference suggested the conduct of pilot studies for finalisation of the approach. This situation had been realised by the author much earlier and therefore, very simple concepts were used to study the details of land utilisation and the practices of cultivation in Arunachal Pradesh in as much depth as possible under the given circumstances.

It is implied that the main method of cultivation in this region is Jhuming, and it is believed that Jhum cycle is shortening over time. In 1948, Shri C.R. Stonor the then Agricultural Officer of Arunachal Pradesh, estimated that the Jhuming cycle was of about 20–25 years. No other reliable data is available from any source except passing references by various authors. In the realm of Jhum cultivation, not only the quantity of land under Jhum per capita or per household is not known, it is also not known how much Jhum yields per acre, per capita or per household. And it is not even known what employment the Jhum practice generate and for how long, leaving aside the break-ups like employment generated with age and sex, the break-ups for
items like cutting, sowing, weeding, harvesting and the like. It is still a matter of speculation whether jhuming can be improved with more inputs and technological applications. Except in a most general way, little is known of the months of sowing, harvesting and land preparation. It is even difficult to hazard a guess if any changes have occurred in the methods of jhum cultivation from 'within' because of inputs like of manure, fertilisers, pesticides, high yielding varieties of seeds etc. These questions have to be answered. The Administration and various research workers have called the jhum practice of cultivation as "wasteful". Much is said about diverting the people to permanent cultivation popularly known as WRC/TRC. But the extent of 'wastefulness' that plagues the land, has not been established nor has the comparative productivity of jhums and WRC/TRC fields has been assessed. Even the rate at which WRC/TRC fields are developing with all the blessings of the Administration is understood only as a guess. The only yardstick available is the amount of subsidy given to the people year after year to develop certain stretches into WRC/TRC fields, with no supporting information on what areas are 'actually'
under WRC/TRC and the annual incidence of cultivation of WRC/TRC fields out last season with government subsidy.

Further, it is not known to what extent and to what measure the overall primitiveness of development of Arunachal Pradesh can be related to a standardised scale of development of the country as a whole or to the neighbouring areas, and what are the components of the dynamics of transformation of primitiveness to progress and how these components can be classified as advantageous or otherwise for further progress.

There is no benchmark data to start with. The 'local' expertise consists of knowing how little is known. But an assessment of 'The Problems of Agricultural Development in Arunachal Pradesh', can be made only after ascertaining in depth the interplay of various economic forces which are paramount in determining the growth or otherwise of agriculture in its broad sense. The restraints on the development of agriculture are required to be clearly recognised. These restraints could be quite a number, each interlocking the other into a fused mass.
In order to resolving doubts or confusions posed by data gaps, it is found necessary to conduct a field study into the specific aspects from which reliable conclusions are required to be drawn. Such field studies, in their turn, are liable to bring to light certain local findings which may point towards the need for widening the scope of field research for the purpose of substantiating or modifying the current impressions.

Such a field enquiry has therefore been conducted and its results are analysed in Part II of this Thesis.