Chapter VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, accounts on different facets of life of the Tangkhuls have been given against the background of their natural surroundings. It has been observed that depending on the geographical situation of their habitats, the development of the region receives varying degrees of attention of the people and the government. The land of the Tangkhuls may broadly be divided into four economic regions viz. North (Rahhei), West (Tharao or Yang), South (Kamo) and South-West (Thaorei) on the basis of the types of occupation provided by these regions. The special regional characteristics of these regions are described below.

(1) North Region: This region is well known for the manufacture of salt and earthen pots. As regards the manufacture of earthen pots, about 250 men are found to be engaged in this industry being assisted by their womenfolk. Since agriculture is the main occupation of these workers, pottery is a secondary occupation engaging the workers during the period from December to
April when they are free from heavy agricultural activities. The earthen pots of this regions have a wide market throughout Maniapur East district. Even the pots are purchased by the inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Somra in Burma. The raw materials such as the black clay and grit are found in plenty in this area. Wood from the nearby forests is used as fuel for heating the pots in the final stage of production. Till now pottery is not a full time occupation of the people. It is resorted to on part-time basis to supplement their income and also to meet their domestic requirements. This cottage industry, however, suffers from certain demerits. The work is carried on independently on individual or family basis. The raw materials are not used in the most economical manner. Secondly, due to deforestation of the jungle, the people are facing scarcity of the fuel day by day. Thirdly, the lack of transport facilities hampers marketing of the finished products in remote areas and naturally the quantity of products cannot be increased even though both men and materials are available for increasing production. Lastly, the general economic poverty of the people is causing setback in the improvement of this important cottage industry.
Another equally important secondary occupation facing more or less a similar situation as that of pottery is the manufacture of salt which has been in existence from very ancient time. Today the production of salt is confined in Murangobung village. About 490 kgs of salt is produced daily though the quantity is a little less during the rainy season due to engagement in agriculture and also for want of fuel. The production of salt suffers from two directions viz. rising cost and scarcity of fuel on the one hand and competition against the cheap imported salt from outside on the other hand.

(2) Western Region: Villages like Sondal, Phadang, Thinem, Sirarakhong, Tolloi, Khaim, Vchrul etc. which are traditionally well known as weaving centres are located in this region. Unfortunately, the use of loom cloths among the people has become not highly popular as in the past, and this change in the taste of the people in general may be attributed to two significant phenomena namely Christianity and western education. The use of traditional dress can be seen during festive occasions only particularly among the menfolk. As for the females, loin cloth and the cotton shawl for the upper part of the body which are woven in their looms are still in use in addition to western dress like
skirt, frock, cape etc. From the economic point of view, the decline of the use of traditional dress may be due to higher production cost as a result of higher price of yarn, longer time taken in production and small quantity of production. Lack of new designs in keeping with the changing taste of the people is also another factor for the gradual disuse of traditional cloths.

Coming to agriculture, this region is known for its terraced fields. Though the people are well experienced in this method of cultivation, no steps are being taken for improving the production by introducing modern techniques. The present terraced fields suffer from the following demerits:

(a) The field is entirely rain fed without any irrigation facilities. The irregularities of rainfall in a year may cause less yield of crops.

(b) Cattle are not used for ploughing the field.

(c) The farmers are using ancient agricultural tools.

(d) Absence of widespread use of improved varieties of seed, and also delay in supply of these improved seeds are factors for low yield of crops in this region.
(e) The use of fertilizers is practically nil in this region due to problem of transport and lack of distribution centres in the interior areas.

(f) The farmers are not well acquainted with the modern techniques of agriculture and their economic condition, financial position etc. are far from satisfactory for enabling them to expand and improve their agricultural works.

(3) South Western Region: This is the most fertile area in the region where in some villages, double cropping in a year is even resorted to. Of this region, mention may be made of Bankeithel, Teison, Thambung and Tera villages sofar as production of paddy is concerned. The average production of paddy per hectare is 5.10 tonnes which is above average by the standard of the agricultural lands in the hills. In this region a small barrage on Thang river has been constructed providing irrigation facilities to about 200 hectares of land. Here, the farmers are found to use improved varieties of seeds such as Ratna, Taichung, China Paddy, IR-24 and Palmul. Even though the production is higher than in other areas there are a few problems faced by the people at the time of cultivation as detailed below.
(a) Communication facility is very much lacking in this region. The main road leading to Sanakeithel runs across Thang river over which there is not even a wooden bridge. People cross the river when the water-level is low. During the rainy season the communication is fully cut off, and supply of essential commodities is not possible during that period.

(b) Cattle are set free in the jungle. Very often the agricultural fields are damaged by stray cattle.

(c) Irrigation programme has not been taken up except in Sanakeithel.

(d) General ignorance of the people regarding application of chemical fertilizers.

(4) Southern Region: In this region there is not enough land for wet rice cultivation. There are narrow river valleys and steep hills. The spurs and hill slopes are covered with thin layer of soil with rocky stones underneath. The main occupation of the people is agriculture and the only method adopted is jhuming or shifting cultivation. The people are not aware of the damage they have done towards forests and conservation of soil due to the harmful practice of jhum.
It has been observed from the above that the whole region of the Tangkhuls suffers from two basic wants viz. lack of satisfactory transport system and practice of shifting cultivation. Since industrialisation in this region is not possible overnight and as agriculture is the principal occupation of the majority of the people, priority should be given for improving and modernising agricultural practices in the following manners:

(i) Steps should be taken for switchover from shifting cultivation to intensive cultivation in order to save the fertility of the soil and protect the forests.

(ii) More emphasis should be given towards irrigation work so that intensive cultivation (terraced cultivation) may become the only mode of cultivation.

(iii) The rivers and streams in the region can be properly harnessed for providing water for domestic use as well as for irrigating the agricultural fields.

(iv) The people should be encouraged to use high yielding varieties of seeds and fertilizers. These items should be distributed through the village co-operative stores at cheaper rates.
(v) Instructions and demonstrations should be given by experts from the Agricultural Department of the Government regarding modern method of agriculture. Areas should be explored for double cropping and also for the cultivation of other varieties of crops and vegetables.

(vi) Till now the rearing of cattle is more for meat than for using them in agricultural operations. Many of the people have not realised the importance of using cattle in cultivation. It will not be difficult on the part of the Government to popularise the use of cattle among the Tangkhuls in their agricultural operations as this method will save time and labour and also increase output.

(vii) The existing land tenure system should be avoided and in its place, 'patta' system entitling individuals to possess land should be introduced. This will give incentive to them for improving their land in a competitive manner.

(viii) Power tillers and water-pumping sets should be made available by the Government to enterprising cultivators. Wherever possible, grants and loans also be given to needy farmers for improving their land.
Encouragements for the development of ancillary works like rearing of cattle, poultry and piggery.

Next to agriculture, weaving is an important cottage industry followed by pottery and salt-making. These three cottage industries cannot be developed for want of proper facilities, technical skill, modern tools, etc. As regards weaving for instance, the skill is still confined to traditional design and method of weaving. With better tools, wider designs and supply of raw materials at cheaper price, the weaving industry of the people can be made popular and lucrative for those engaged in the trade. The following suggestions will prove fruitful if implemented.

(i) The Government should make arrangement for supply of raw materials (warps etc.) to the weavers at cheaper price preferably through cooperative societies. Steps should also be taken for plantation of cotton.

(ii) Modern machineries and tools such as flying shuttle looms etc. should be supplied at subsidised rates.
(iii) Weaving experts should be deputed to demonstrate the handling of the modern machineries and also to train the weavers in organised classes in those areas not fully covered by the Industrial Training Institute.

(iv) The I.T.I. at Khul should also be expanded for admitting more students in this trade and scholarships should also be given to deserving students.

(v) The successful students should be selected as instructors of the weaving co-operative societies.

(vi) In the schools, handloom cloth should form a part of the school uniform and provision should be made for supply of such cloth at concessional rate to the students.

(vii) The Government should establish marketing assistance departmental cells in this region. Government should also organise agricultural and handicrafts exhibitions at the subdivisional headquarters every year in order to provide enthusiasm and a sense of competition among the people.

More or less the above suggestions are applicable in the case of pottery and salt-manufacture. Besides the above occupations, the region promises for the successful development of three more economically useful occupations or works. These are pisciculture, tea plantation and rearing of Tasar silkworm.
The region has got a number of monsoon fed rivers and streams and in most of them the supply of water is perennial and many suitable sites may be spotted out for rearing varieties of fish, by digging ponds at such sites. During the rainy days, in order to protect the fish from overflooding, sieves should be used in order to prevent the fish from escaping on the one hand and to stop the pebbles, rocks and woods brought by the strong water currents from entering inside the pond on the other. Normal currents of water of rivers and streams bring down plankton which forms the chief food for the fish. Other artificial food like cow-dung, oil-cakes, rice grains etc. can also be given. Trout and carp varieties will be most suitable though other varieties of fish can also be reared. Selection of fingerlings and training of the villagers in the trade should be done by experts from the Government. Entrepreneurship and village cooperative societies should be developed to function properly. Besides rearing fish in a large scale as in the ponds, fish can also be reared in the agricultural fields where terraced cultivation is practised. The above steps will change the food habit of the people for the better by making fish available at low cost.
Another suggested occupation for the people is the plantation of tea. Tea grows wild in Manipur, and test by the Government Agricultural department has proved the plantation of tea to be suitable in this region. The Manipur variety is a hardy and high yielding one generally resistant to drought, but produces tea comparatively inferior to that of Assam. Leaves are dark-green narrow with more or less intermediate leaf-pose. In this region the soil is dominated by laterite soil which in general contains more phosphoric acid, potash, nitrogen and organic matters. Such type of soil is the best for tea cultivation. The volume of annual rainfall in this region is good enough for maintaining fertility of the soil. The mountain streams serve as natural drainage, and if more minor drainages are provided in addition to the existing ones so that the plantation site may be kept dry, the tea plants can easily thrive in this region. Besides the region is situated in high altitude and thereby frosted during the winter. Frost has a beneficial effect on tea plants as it kills or eliminates pests. Once the plantation of tea at a large scale has become successful, other subsidiary or connected industries like ply making etc. may crop up within the region or other parts of the state.
The region is rich in forests specially of oak mixed with pine and chest-nut trees. Not less than 2600 square kilometers of the area are covered by these trees. Among species of oak tree, *Quercus serrata*, *Q. dealbata* and *Q. pachyphylla* are found in plenty and these trees provide the best food for Tasar silkworms. *Antheraea roylei* and *Antheraea mylitta* species of Tasar silkworm thrive best in this region. Recently a hybrid between *Antheraea roylei* and *Antheraea pernyi* of Chinese origin called *Antheraea pernyi* has proved to be the most prospective specie for the development of Tasar industry in Manipur. For the economic development of this region, attention should also be given towards sericulture (i) by providing technical training in the villages, (ii) by granting loans and subsidies to private farms and entrepreneurs as incentives for rearing tasar silkworms, (iii) by preventing felling down of oak trees, (iv) by introducing oak tasar culture as a subject of study in the Industrial Training Institute at Ukhrul and (v) by opening marketing centres to purchase the cocoons.

All these suggestions for the improvement of the region will have little meaning unless the existing communication facilities in the area have been improved.
At present the only all-weather road communication worth the name is that linking Imphal with the district headquarters at Ukhrul. The intra-district road linkage between the subdivisional headquarters and the inter-village communication system within the subdivision still remain backward. The absence of a good communication system is responsible for social distance and group rivalry and it also hampers the maintenance of law and order. Besides, the lack of good communication is the major hindrance to development activities of any region and it always keeps a region backward. For the development of the socio-economic life of the Tangkhuls, the communication systems in the Manipur East district should be improved and the existing major roads leading to administrative headquarters and major villages should be converted into pucca roads wherever possible. The introduction of animal transport should be made for speedy movement of men and goods between the villages where the roads are not motorable. The Manipuri pony which is famous for its speed and stamina can be utilized to serve this socio-economic cause.
Tangkhul girls in traditional dresses
Decoration of human and animal skulls on the wall
Tangkhul's traditional hut (north)

Tangkhul's traditional hut (south)
An old man in traditional dresses

Girls in traditional dresses

Boy and girl in traditional dresses
Water supply in the paddy field

Irrigation canal at Sanakeithel village
Terrace paddy field

Jhum cultivation

PINE FOREST

Multiple crops
(paddy and soybean)
Fishing basket trap

Fishing in the agricultural field with a local basket tray

FISHING IN RIVER

Fishing hole in the agriculture field
Salt spring at Marangphung village

Salt manufacture

Salt manufacture

Salt manufacture
Weaver in work

Basket making
Traditional tug-of-war boys vs. girls during "Luira Phanit"

Images:
- Over the grave in Chingjuoi village
- Water reservoir