CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The saying that India lives in its villages is as close to reality now as it was in the pre-Independence period. Over five decades of economic planning after Independence has passed and yet the majority of the country’s population still continues to live in rural areas. Agriculture and its allied activities still provide employment and income to a substantial segment of the population of the rural workforce. There have been many changes taking place in them over the last hundred years and they continue to occupy a place of importance in contemporary India (Beteille 2006:79). Atal has said that Indian villages are grappling with the struggle of change and it is time again to ‘return to the villages and draw the contours of change in them afresh’ (Atal 2006:117). Far-reaching changes of socio-economic importance are being ushered in by the villages themselves which are facilitated by conscious state attempts on the one hand and innovating leadership on the other so that the people are motivated to pursue their own goals and build on politically, educationally and economically sound and productive system (Saksena 1978:17). Oommen has stated that the functioning of such dynamics cannot be fully understood correctly unless the social structure of village society are taken into account in its changing perspective (Oommen 1984: x). In this light an enquiry into what has been happening in the rural areas assumes significance.

There are other implications of these tendencies in sociology- such kinds of studies define another task of sociology as essentially social policy and social engineering science (Singh1986:10). Srinivas stated that an intimate knowledge of the social life
of the peasantry in different parts of the country, obtained by men trained to obtain such knowledge, would be helpful in the execution of plans, in avoiding avoidable human misery and in increasing efficiency (Srinivas 1955:13). Gupta more recently reiterates this concern, stating that as useful as census figures and statistical surveys are yet they are cannot capture the profundity of the changes that are occurring in rural India. ‘The depth of disenchantment’ which prevails in the villages should be comprehended through in-depth investigations in his view (Gupta 2005:752). Such investigations present vast possibilities to satisfy people’s legitimate aspirations through the improvement of government administrative structures, skills and practices and to raise the abilities of those in government. In view of the above stated facts a sociological understanding of the social dynamics of villages is a worthwhile undertaking.

Village studies in India have gone through a series of phases. Based on the early village studies the Indian village was considered as a closed and isolated system. Charles Metcalfe described them in the 1810’s as ‘self contained little republics’ (Metcalfe 1832: 331) just as Henry Maine described the village as the least destructible institution of the Indian society (Maine 1974: 192-193). It was this early material that formed the base for the fresh series of sociologically oriented empirical studies on the village. The view of the village as monolithic, atomistic and static became unacceptable to subsequent studies on the Indian village.

Starting from the 1950’s village studies began to take a new character and they presented an alternative picture of the village- as entities that were a part of a larger society. These new studies that emerged refuted the myth of ‘little republics’ and identified the unifying factors of the village and how it was linked with the wider
world through its extensions in the territorial, relational and religious sphere (Atal 2003: 175). Dube noted that there was no village in India which could be completely autonomous and independent; an individual was not just the member of a village community but he also belonged to a religious group, tribe and caste which had a much wider spread territorially and comprises several villages (Dube 1955:5). Srinivas too in a similar vein wrote that the villager’s field extends beyond the village having a wide scope and also that the village gets fundamentally affected whenever there are political and economic forces set in motion in the larger society (Srinivas 1955:11).

Similar thematic strands can be found in the village studies of the 1960’s and 1970’s that examine the intricate networks of interaction and behaviour of the village with the wider social system. During this period many studies were oriented to the effort to understand the development initiatives that were started at the national level. Others tried to measure the successes or failures of the policies of these developmental efforts and its effect on the character and social structure of the village. The focus of the village studies changed from the description of social structure to that of social change (Atal 2003: 179).

Along with these developments another matter of concern was the kind of methodology to be adopted for the study of villages. Srinivas advocated that a premium be given to empirical studies over the historical ones (1955). Historical data in his view were neither accurate nor detailed and rich as the kind of data that was collected by field anthropologists (Srinivas 1969: 788). He promoted the method of intensive field study through his study of the village of Rampura.
Dube made a case for the use of the structural functional approach over the intensive field studies in the study of the Indian village community. He pointed out that intensive field studies do not provide diagnostic case studies to understand the structure and process of the village community. He also argued that village is not viewed as a synthesised community but a biotic community and that such field studies lack a sense of coherent frame of reference which is relevant to the structure and organisation of Indian society. Arguing that a study of change invariably required a good structural-functional framework suggesting that together with trained social scientists the contextual, classical and local traditions as well as the regional (culture-area), western (ideological-technological) and emergent national (nativistic- re-interpretational- adaptive) traditions may be useful to the study of the Indian village community (Dube 1969: 793).

Yogesh Atal touches more on the viability of the Indian village as a unit of study. He also suggests hypotheses for determining the representativeness of the Indian village (Atal 1969: 801). Ramakrishna Mukherjee’s approach to the study of rural society is qualitatively different from that of Srinivas, Dube and Atal (Mukherjee 1969: 784). Colonial factors and forces which led to the study of villages are analysed by him. He compares and contrasts village studies that were conducted by economists, social anthropologists and sociologists pointing out that while the economists in their studies ignored the socio-cultural matrix of the village community, the anthropologists and the sociologists in turn have ignored the economic and class matrix in their village studies. Mukherjeeee called for a combined and synthesised approach which could account for socio-cultural as well as economic aspects of village life (ibid.).
Dasgupta classified village studies into i) fact-finding empirical studies, and ii) problem oriented studies. While the first category fit with the kind of studies that were carried out in the early fifties the second type came after that in the sixties and seventies which also had different theoretical perspectives. Dasgupta advocated the second type of village studies as in his view intra-village studies with had comparable units and variables could prove to be more relevant than the type of studies under the first category outlined by him. (Dasgupta 1977: 6-7). To supplement the in-depth studies he discusses census perspective of village studies, survey, NSS view of village studies, farm management surveys etc. Only in recent years, he opines, has there been an emergence of problem oriented studies that are geared to testing specific hypotheses and policy formulating objectives (ibid.: 3-4).

Ishwaran writing in the early 1970’s observed that the changes in the village society were national oriented and global oriented (Ishwaran 1970:1). The challenges to the village were coming not only from the outside but even from within institutional mechanism have developed as a response and device to meet the emergent needs of the village community. Ishwaran states the need for two approaches- firstly, that social change should be analysed not in terms of a single factor but multiple factors; secondly, that the micro-anthropological studies should be correlated with macro sociological analyses. According to him intensive field studies of the village community was needed but it was also required to link such studies to the wider aspect of morphology and content of social change (ibid.: 2).

In the context of studying social change in villages, tradition as a conceptual referent in the study of social structure assumed importance and persisted through another approach where the focus was mainly on the historicity of social differentiation,
change and modernization of social structure (Singh 1986: 41). A considerable amount of debate emerged on the concepts of social change through the process of modernisation and regarding the corresponding concept of tradition. In this debate, the discussions focused on issues of cultural adaptation and synthesis and whether traditional social institutions, values and structure responded to the demands and processes of modernisation.

Among the first and most influential scholar to write on the interaction between tradition and modernity was M.N Srinivas (1966). For Srinivas change assumes two major forms: first, through the concept of Sanskritisation was the various forms of mobility within the caste system, and second through the concept of Westernisation the process of change on a wider scale. Sanskritisation was defined by him as the process by which a low Hindu or tribal or other group changes its custom, ritual ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently twice born caste (Srinivas 1966:6). He pointed out that in the process of Sanskritisation while the positional changes in the system may occur the system itself does not change- hence the traditional structure remains the same. Westernisation on the other hand, was used to characterise the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of British rule which took place at a much wider level (ibid.: 50). The Western contact through the British rule was the main exogenous source which brought changes in the social structure. As he stated “this contact had a special historicity which brought about many far reaching changes in culture and social structure of the Indian society. Not all of them, however, could be called modernising. The basic direction of this contact was towards modernisation, but in the process a variety of traditional institutions also got reinforcement (1972: 202). Srinivas however conceded that concepts such as Sanskritisation and Westernisation while they
provide a framework for analysis of cultural changes they do not have the scope for the explanation of changes of the social structure.

Another important approach to the study of social change was that of the concepts of Little and Great traditions which was used by Robert Redfield in his studies of the Mexican communities (Singh 1988: 13). His work pointed out the significant relations between modernity and tradition. Redfield’s conceptual framework was used by Milton Singer and McKim Marriott to study the process of social change in India. Based primarily on the evolutionary view they postulated the idea that the structure of tradition grows in two stages- the first was through indigenous evolution or orthogenetic forces, while the second was through contacts with other cultures or civilizations or heterogenetic encounters (ibid.). The first type comprises the cultural processes of the Little Tradition while the second type are those that constitute the Great Tradition. This approach assumed that all civilisations start at the orthogenetic level of level of cultural organisation and through course of time become diversified not just with internal growth but also through a heterogenetic process through the contact with other civilisations (ibid.). Of relevance here are Marriot’s contribution of the concepts of parochialisation and universalisation through which he attempted an understanding of the way in which ties which relate the village to the outside world are also responsible for bringing the outside world to the village. The latter is a process through which ‘little’ tradition through its elements such as customs, deities and rites move upward to enter the ‘great’ tradition and in this process acquire a more universal status. Parochialisation on the other hand refers to the opposite process where elements from the ‘great’ tradition become confined to particular local ‘little’ tradition (Marriott 1955: 197-200). The processes of
parochialisation and universalisation facilitate interaction between the little and great traditions.

After a critical examination of the above mentioned concepts Dube went further to offer a six-fold classification of traditions in India each of which he contended should be studied in both urban and rural contexts for the evaluation of social change. He enumerated them as the emergent national tradition, the classical tradition, the western tradition, the local tradition, the regional tradition, and the local sub cultural traditions of social groups (Dube 1965: 424).

Notable among the various attempts to synthesise the divergent perspectives on the study of social change in India is Yogendra Singh’s *Modernisation of Indian Tradition*. Through his theoretical approach he attempted to overcome what he referred to as the ‘partial focus on social processes’ and the limitations of the analytical categories that were used in the previous studies of change in India, which he argued are the reason why they have been rendered inadequate and narrow (1988:1). Singh identified certain common themes in the earlier perspectives and through this he used it to create his own comprehensive overarching taxonomic synthesis based on “unilinear evolutionism in the long run” (*ibid.*: 23). He distinguishes the following- (a) the macro and the micro contexts in which change-producing processes begin and materialize; (b) the internal (orthogenetic) and external (heterogenetic) sources of change; and (c) the structural and cultural substantive domains within which phenomena are undergoing change.

In traditional India continual instances of change were there without implications of modernisation (*ibid.*: 192) and the changes were initiated through both heterogenetic and orthogenetic sources which were related to both culture and social structure, but
which were mainly pre-modern in quality and nature. He contended that many changes had already been introduced in the traditional Indian society even before the influence of Western ideas through orthogenetic forces such as Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism and so on which resulted in the differentiation of the traditional social values and structure. The Islamic tradition resulted from a heterogenetic source as it was established by conquest. Endogenous changes in the cultural tradition of Hinduism were mainly confined to Sanskritisation before the beginning of Western contact (*ibid.*).

The approach that Singh advocated is generally understood as structural-historical. The process of change and transformation in this approach is analysed in a historical setting often under the ideological canopy of modernization. Social structure is defined as social interaction processes and the observable sets of role relations. Tradition is created as historical and cultural legacy of beliefs, values, and customs which are accretive and adaptive in nature. The empirical contexts provide the bases from where the notion of tradition is drawn serving as a source material both for ethno-sociology and structuralism (1988:213-215). The notion of tradition is formulated through observable historical process of social change and modernization. Tradition in his view is not the polar opposite of modernity; it is in fact something that is dynamic in nature and constantly being upgraded. Singh stated that ‘institutional changes introduced through land reforms, community development programmes, panchayat elections and national elections have considerably changed the structure of community cohesion and its pattern of inter-group relationship and power structure. But none of these factors have completely eroded the sense of village identity nor do they portend to do so in the future. Since independence many government sponsored schemes of development and reform
have been introduced having the village as a unit of administration and communication of change producing values and techniques. The significance of village as a social microcosm has thereby been further reinforced’ (ibid.: 187).

Singh maintains that the forces of modernisation are carried forward by traditional structures through a process of selective adaptive changes rather than through structural breakdown (ibid.: x). According to him then a form of neo-traditionalism proceeds along with modernisation. As a process of change, modernisation in societies is governed equally by old circumstances being modified with new activities as well as the continuation of traditional activities under changed circumstances. In order to accommodate the requirements of modernisation societies underwent selective adaptive changes (ibid.: 78).

The continuity of cultural and social identity is best exemplified by the Indian village where despite the external changes impinged on its internal arrangements it has continued to endure as a territorial unit and it continues to be an important point of reference for individual identification. The vast literature on the Indian village gives credence to this assertion and ‘the Indian village as a micro-structure has thus not only been recognised but has gradually become a vital aspect of national development planning and politico consciousness’ (ibid.: 184). In light of this we may say that the Indian village is a sub-system within a greater system and serves as the focal point of individual identification within a greater field. The villages of India were never isolates nor were they static. Although changes from various sources were introduced incorporated and diffused into the traditional social structure, such changes did not diminish the importance and necessity of villages for
the people. The simple reason being that from the village stemmed the roots of one’s cultural background and most importantly one’s identity.

In the study of the social dynamics of a Tai Khampti village the patterns of Yogendra Singh’s structural-historical approach was followed. In order to understand the processes and the structure of a Tai Khampti village an exploration of the Tai Khampti social structure as reflected in all the social institutions was made.

The Khampti villages may be discussed as a distinct universe of social arrangements significantly different from other Indian villages because the Khampti villages are wholly tribal and they differ vastly in social, cultural and political institutions. The Tai Khampti of Arunachal Pradesh are found to inhabit the area around the Lohit river. They migrated into Assam in the second half of the 18th century during the Ahom rule from Khampti Loung (Great Khampti land) near the upper sources of the Irrawaddy river. The Khampti have their own distinct script and they speak a dialect which belongs to the Northern Shan group of dialects. Buddhism forms an important criterion of group identity among the Khampti and it informs most of their socio-cultural life. The monastery is an integral part of every Khampti village and at present Khampti clans are identified with reference to their earlier place of settlement before they came to India. In Khampti villages, land is under the ownership of the chief and this land is put to agricultural and non-agricultural uses. Individual families enjoy usu-fructuary rights in cultivable land. They are valley dwellers and practice permanent wet and dry paddy cultivation.
Review of literature:

A large number of studies have been carried out on the Indian village community focusing on varied themes and perspectives and it continues to be a subject of intense study. The beginnings of the study on Indian villages can be traced to the intensive survey works that were conducted by British colonial administrators for the collection of revenue and the data that was collected have been valuable sources of information of that period.

Economists were among the first social scientists to conduct village studies. Their work in the early twentieth century on individual villages are considered significant contributions since they were the first type of in-depth study although they were criticised for ignoring essential aspects of village life such as the socio-economic and cultural features of village life. Among the early anthropologists, the work of American missionary Weiser was significant in that it was among the first studies which gave an insight into village life from an anthropological perspective.

Reports of British administrators like Metcalfe stated that the Indian village was an unchanging and static entity conceiving them to be ‘little republics’. Maine reiterated this conception when he stated that the Indian village was an ‘organised and self-acting’ ‘brotherhood’ where there was political and economic self sufficiency, completely removed from outside influence and interference. He also stated that the village community ‘include a nearly complete establishment of occupations and trades for enabling them to continue their collective life without assistance from any person or body external to them’ (Maine 1974: 123).

Later studies beginning from the 1950’s questioned this popular belief of the Indian village and proved through their empirical studies that the popular belief in the
Indian village as little republics to be a myth. The following literatures have been selected for review focusing on the theme of the research and to access the body of knowledge on the subject concerned:

Srinivas (1955) studied Rampura a multi caste, nucleated village in the state of Mysore. He gives an idea of the nature of ties that run across the lines of caste in this multi-caste village. He described the village as a structure of relationships of role and status. The castes kept apart by endogamy and the rules of commensality are brought together by institutions and sentiments that unite the whole village: the ceremonies, the village political organisation; the common dependence on the dominant peasant caste. Individuals and families of one caste are brought together with those of other castes through a variety of relationships of patron-client, friendship or party politics. The village was found to be an intricately woven network of relationships.

Gough (1955) studied the social structure of a Tanjore village, namely Kumbapettai. She considers the structure of social relations within this village and the extent to which it is changing as an isolable social unit. She notes that the breakdown of the feudal economic system, the emergence of lower caste groups in economic rivalry rather than cooperation and the widening range of social relations beyond the village have endangered the power of the Brahmans. She also notes changes in ritual cooperation which show a widening of social relations and a tendency toward new homogeneity in ritual practices of Brahmans and the higher Non- Brahman castes, yet at the same time the emergence of a new low class of unbelievers who pin their faith rather to rebellious political action. Accidental contiguity and similarity of
economic status were found to be replacing kinship ties as organising principles within and between villages.

Marriott (1955) raises the question of the interrelation of an Indian village, namely Kishan Garhi in Uttar Pradesh, with the larger society and with the civilization of which it is a small and local part. The interaction of the village is seen as a relation of little community and great community. Native Indian government is in part seen as a growth upward from the institutions of the local community. On the other hand features that at first appear as local developments- elements of kinship, status, village layout and typical modes of conflict- turn out to be ‘reflexes of general state policy’. Caste relationships too are in part reflexes of institutions of the wider community ‘degradations of the royal style’. The conclusion is reached that both little communities and greater communities are mutually necessary conditions for each other’s existence in their present forms. To the two aspects of the double process of this interaction Marriott names Universalisation and Parochialisation.

Miller (1955) in his essay “Village Structure in North Kerela” provides a general picture of village structure in North Kerela. The bulk of the population comprised of Sudras and untouchables. The main structural cleavages were found to be between territorial units and- villages, chiefdoms and kingdoms- not between castes. He notes that despite sweeping changes after the British administration one factor that has operated in many places to keep internal village structure intact was the method of selecting candidates to become adhigaris or village headman. Important differences have arisen between those villages where the traditional desavari still supply the adhigari and those in which the adhigari is simply a low ranking government employee. In the latter type if the headman family of the old system
survives at all it has lost most of the economic and other sanctions behind its former authority and it has gained none of the new ones. In the former traditional sets of rights and obligations between castes and the values of superiority and inferiority remain strong. The territorial loyalty which unites the village is much more potent. He concludes that village unity in North Kerala is a somewhat nebulous conception. A physical, territorial unity may exist, but it is often not obvious, because of scattered settlement.

Dube (1955) in his study of the village of Shamirpet in the state of Hyderabad presents a descriptive study of the village and concludes the study with an analysis of its changes. He presents a detailed account of the social, economic, ritual, kinship and family structure of the village in the contemporary period. He contends that the spheres of community life in which changes were most pronounced were in that of material culture and technology. The social structure of the community was found to be basically the same although with every administrative or political change there were several organisational changes. Under the impact of the new socio economic factors, the family ties have weakened, the kin group has lost some of its characteristic strength and in the system of status evaluation achieved status is competing with traditionally ascribed status. But the society was found to be still caste structured as caste played a vital role in its social, economic and ritual organisation.

Bailey (1957) in his study of Bisipara a highland village in Orissa assessed the changes which ensued in the traditional society due to the coming of the British administration which brought the village into the larger economy of India and set in motion a number of changes. Among these Bailey lists the splitting of the joint
family which he argues was due to economic disparity among its members. Joint families broke up and estates became smaller, some even being forced to sell land to meet contingent costs. This meant the decline of client-ship which in turn led to employment of labour on purely economic terms. In the new economy wealth could also be obtained by means other than owning land. The outcastes such as the Boad and the Ganjam made striking use of the new economic opportunities, partly through legislative reforms and partly under the stimulus of an increasing population. This in turn brought about adjustments in the traditional political structure of the village. The members of the warrior caste-group who were the traditional rulers were now unable to wield power over the other caste groups as before. They no longer held the productive resources.

Epstein (1962) in her study discusses the implications of introducing irrigation on the social structure of two villages. She studies the changes which have taken place in the past 25 years in the wet and dry village of Wangala and Dalena in the Mysore region. Wangala’s traditional economy was reinforced while Dalena had a diversification of economic roles and relations in the village. Hence there was little change in Wangala while in Dalena there has been more pronounced change in the nature of a break in the traditional economic relations between peasant masters and their untouchable clients. This led to a severance of relationship with individual households. According to her the persistence of the value attached to farming reflects both the instability of the wider economy and the resistance to change in value.

Beteille (1965) in his study of the village of Sripuram sought to systematically describe the different dimensions of social stratification in the community. For
Beteille, the physical structure of a village reflected its social structure so much so that the distribution of population in the village in territorial divisions depicted characteristics of similarities and differentiation in structural terms. In the village he found a contracting of structural distance between the proximate segments of the caste system. He attributes this change to Westernisation and Secularisation. However, he maintains that this contraction of structural distance is not prevalent at all levels, for instance between Brahmins and Non-Brahmins. He also notes that today there is a gradual dissociation between the class and caste system. The ownership of land is no longer a decisive factor at Sripuram in acquiring power. According to him social mobility, economic change and political modernisation lead to the creation not only of new relations but also new values, attitudes and aspirations. Some of the contours of the traditional structure tend to be blurred and new ones tend to emerge. The simple traditional structure was thus open to changes due to external forces, which brought about new articulations in the social, political and economic spheres.

Ishwaran (1968) in his study of Shivapur, a medium sized, multi-caste village in Mysore argued that in some ways its social structure was becoming more closed and in other ways it was becoming more open. The economic and political spheres according to him are aspects of life more receptive to changes from outside. On the other hand, caste and kinship were becoming more closed. In his analysis of the caste system he contends that it was not crumbling either under the impact of legislation aiming to abolish it or under the impact of technological, political and other changes impinging Shivapur from the outside. According to him caste communalism is becoming stronger while traditional relationships of inter-caste dependency are weakening. Changes in the kinship structure are identified to have
come from the effect of legislation which has brought about monogamy and also
given legal equality with men. With regard to the power structure he argues that the
new has not supplanted the old but exists side by side and is in fact subservient to
the old. He suggests two factors very prominent in Indian village life which may
account for its historical persistence. The first is adaptability and the second is
internal consistency. He argues that both reinforce each other.

Mandelbaum (1972) focused on the roles of groups and systems of village society
and the rules of the social game and considered these to be important in the study of
villages for a better understanding of the whole system enabling us to get a better
idea of the Indian village. The village in sum is a basic feature of civilisation and
continues to be a viable community for its inhabitants. A person’s village provides
him with one source of his self-identification with a nexus of his activities a stage
for his status and an area of conflict. Observers can view it as a system comprising
component jati groups and functional activities, and also as a subsystem of larger
social systems.

Shah (1973) studied changes in the structures of family life in the Gujarat village of
Radhvanaj and not only tried to understand family life but also critiqued western
assumptions about the impact of modernization on the traditional structure. He
disputes the existence of a sociological trend from large and complex to small and
simple households, he does not conclude that the Indian household system has
remained stationary. He detects a more complex process of change than a simple
unidirectional one. He argues that the Sanskritisation of the tribes and low castes
may have resulted in an increased emphasis on residential unity of the patri-kin
whereas Westernisation of higher castes may have weakened the principle. His work
also stresses the need to recognise the resilience of traditional structures in the face of modernity. He questions the popular belief that the Indian joint family is disintegrating under the pressure of modern forces.

Chakravarti’s (1975) work was the outcome of intensive fieldwork in Devisar, a multi-caste village in Rajasthan. His analysis showed that many of the political processes in the community cannot be fully understood within the framework of caste alone. The main concern of this study was to show how political relations in the community had been affected by various measures initiated in the wider political society, such as land reforms, adult franchise, and democratic decentralization. A new criterion for village leadership was introduced with the onset of these developments, which made the authority of a leader, at least in principle, subject to the people’s mandate. As a result of such measures the foundations were laid for the establishment of a new political order in the village. The wider political society, in which these measures originated, also fostered the development of a new kind of leadership in the village. This leadership played a crucial role in overthrowing the traditional leadership, and thus paved the way for a full development of the new political order in Devisar.

Lakshminarayan (1976) examined the impact of the massive inputs and of the concentrated efforts at social change in three villages of the Mandya district in Mysore namely, Pura, Kalale and Halli. The conclusion drawn is that the villagers now operate in a much wider universe and have made rational choices from the range of innovations offered to them. It was found that tradition sets limits on the modernising goals. Caste and ritual hierarchy persist, a consequence of which is that the untouchable Holeya and Madiga have had little benefit from planned
development. The new political structure based on adult franchise has not affected the village structure. The dominant castes still have the prerogative.

Singh (1988) in ‘Modernisation of Indian Tradition’ analysed the processes of modernisation in India from a systemic sociological perspective. He examined the processes of modernisation at the levels of the ‘macro-structures’ and the ‘micro-structures’ of the Indian social systems focusing on its structural aspects. Among the macro structures he analysed the changing nature of political, industrial and urban structures and categories such as the industrial workers, middle classes and the elite. The role of micro structures such as caste, family and village communities were analysed in the modernisation of the Indian society and its traditions. Contrary to the view of seeing village communities as rooted in a set of structural relationships based on local, territory, folklore, economy and identity his analysis has revealed that they have responded with great adaptive capacity to the demands of modernisation. He concludes that a unique feature of modernisation in India is that it is being mainly carried forward through adaptive changes in the traditional structures rather than structural dissociation or breakdown leading thus to a form of neo- traditionalism.

Satyanarayana (1992) examined the structural changes that have been taking place in two Telangana villages located in the Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh. An attempt was made to examine the impact of irrigation by comparing Chegal, an irrigated village and Cheppial, a non irrigated village with respect to agrarian structure, labour relations, occupational structure and inter- caste relations. With regard to occupational background there were no significant differences between the two villages however the percentage of agricultural labourers was found to be higher.
in the irrigated village. In the irrigated village bonded labour was found to be replaced by labour for daily wages though in the non-irrigated village it was still prevalent. Female and child labour declined in the irrigated village but not so in the non-irrigated village. Jajmani relations were found to be absent in the irrigated village while in the non-irrigated village hereditary relations continued to be present. He also observed that there was a loosening of caste rigidities in the irrigated village while it was still prevalent in the non-irrigated village.

Gupta (2005) in his paper ‘Whither the Indian Village: Culture and Agriculture in ‘Rural’ India’ argued that the twin shackles that once decided matters for India’s villagers, no longer exercise their vigorous hold. He further stated that it was the sheer inertia of the agrarian economy that hardly allowed for any optimism, which is forcing people to look elsewhere for both livelihood and respect. In this sense it was not that the village was changing towards one direction towards urbanisation but rather the impetus for change is taking place in the village itself. While a break in caste rigidities has fostered greater fluidity in occupational choices, agricultural stagnation has ensured the constant march towards urban areas. According to him it is in the light of these changes that the ‘culture’ surrounding agriculture and the village needs to be understood.

The various village studies have focused on the internal dynamics and structure of inter-relationships of the population within the village. These studies showed that the village in general has been analysed in terms of the unity of the village and different types of solidarity other than that of caste. Caste stresses on the ties between members of the different castes living in the same village. The extension of the village into the outside world and the inter-penetration of the outside world into
the village, through market forces, kinship networks and affinal ties and the changes that have been brought about in the village due to external forces and hence the changes in traditional inter-relationships in the community

Indian villages do not have a similar pattern throughout the country, they vary vastly in ethnic, linguistic and cultural composition which also determine their character. Village studies of the kind that were conducted in central India were replicated by social scientists in the north eastern states of India which have contributed immensely to an understanding of the villages of the numerous tribes which inhabit the states that form the region. Following below are some village studies that were conducted in the north eastern states which have been reviewed keeping in mind the nature of the study and to throw light on the issues and themes that concern tribal villages.

Barua (1978) studied certain aspects of social relations in Moranjan, an Ahom village in the Sibsagar district of Assam. An attempt was made to assess the trend of changes in the socio-cultural life of the community. Most of the changes that have occurred in the present period are found to have their root in the economic and political factors, which have also influenced the socio-religious life of the villagers. She found that in the economic sphere with the percentage of joint families gradually decreasing the phenomenon of uneconomic landholdings threatens the attitude of total reliance on agriculture. She observes that institutions such as the Panchayat, community development project manifest certain foci of loyalty on the level of village politics.

Nongkynrih (2002) in his study of Kongthong village in Meghalaya presented a holistic perspective of the intricate relationships between the four important social
institutions – kinship and marriage, political, economic and religious. The household or iing was found to be the unit of study. The iing acted as the unit of socialization unit, political unit, economic unit and also ritual performing unit. Elder members in an iing socialized the children into the norms and values of the society. He also discusses the iing as the corporate and property owning group which is viewed as a unit of economic production. Political aspects of the iing are found at the level of decision making functions and the division of authority between the head of the iing (mother) and the eldest brother. In the political institutions there were certain conflicts over the functioning of the traditional political institutions in the context of the modern political system of the country. In the economic sphere he came across the emergence of landless labourers which appears to be a new phenomenon.

Lohe (2002) presented a comprehensive account of the village social organisation and the changes occurring in Chizami village of the Phek district of Nagaland. To the gradual disappearance of the traditional institution of the Morung he has attributed factors such as coming of Christianity and the new formal educational system. He also observes that with the onset of Christianity, formal education and the market system, there have also been changes in the socialisation process. In the sphere of religion the traditional Medanyi religion was found to be mixed with Christian culture. With the coming of British administration, changes have also taken place in the political structure and judicial administration. The traditional system, priesthood and Cusemi are no longer practised. He concludes that there is a tradition of cultural and historical values, beliefs and customs, which are made suitable for a new situation and need in the process of social change.
Mibang and Behera’s (2004) edited volume ‘Dynamics of Tribal Villages in Arunachal Pradesh: Emerging Realities’ is a collection of papers written by various researchers focusing on different aspects of village life in a sample of twenty villages of twelve tribes of the state. The themes in the volume range from social structure, village institutions, resource ownership and management, sacred geography and understanding village life through history and legends. Included in the volume is an analysis of the maintaining interaction within the social structure of the village to an analysis of factors external to the village which account for the change. There is also an analysis of the tradition in different manifestations which existed before the change. The papers included in the volume attempts to answer the question: what forms of thought for understanding emerging realities in tribal villages are relevant when the village experiences external interventions in the process of change? The editors contend that the changes that have been introduced are both in kind and degree but these changes have not entirely replaced traditions. What these studies communicate are the concerns dominant in various villages as ‘public experience’ in the face of the changing situation.

Longkumer (2005) studied the society and village life of Changki village in Nagaland. She provides a comprehensive analysis into all the social institutions of the community concerned. She concludes that Changki village is a traditional village where the continuity of tradition is found in its institutions and social organisations. However, the forces of change being brought in through the mass media, economic opportunities, government intervention in agro-based activities and by the people themselves who are educated, mobile and exposed to the outside influences are gradually changing the village lifestyle. She opines that the accelerated rate of development and the process of change may be transforming the village but the
pattern of change is adaptive in nature where most of the traditional institutions are retained.

From the above review of literature it can be inferred that the authors perceived the village to be an important and viable social entity. The various studies have focused on the internal structure and dynamics of interrelationships of the population within the village. The natures of the processes involved in the face of change have been highlighted and they have also identified the sources of this process and their implications on the village social structure. The studies have acknowledged that the village has been at a continuous state of adjustment in response to changes both from within and without.

While village studies on the different tribes of north east India are plenty, on the Tai Khampti tribe in particular there are only a few works. In most of the works available on the Tai Khampti the focus has primarily been on the historical aspect with sketchy comments on the life, language, customs and institutions of the Khampti in general. Till date no single village study has been conducted which could provide an insight from the sociological point of view. The following works have been cited here which are notable contributions in the politico-historical aspect of the Tai Khampti and which throw valuable light on their history, culture, language and religion.

One of the first efforts in bringing together a comprehensible account of the Khampti was Lila Gogoi’s (1971) edited volume called ‘The Tai Khampti of North East India’. The bulk of the work comprises the compilation of administrative reports made by the British colonial administrators of the Khampti of the erstwhile NEFA. It also includes essays and extracts written by various scholars and writers.
which have been arranged according to their history, ethnology, religion, art and culture, political relations, myths, legends and language. These extracts give an account of life among the Khampti in all the above mentioned spheres during the nineteenth century. Most of the extracts are taken from the British administrators writing in the nineteenth century who recorded the Khampti way of life and their position in the political sphere of the time.

Terwiel (1981) provides a documentary of some of the ritualistic practices of the Tai groups found in Assam- the Ahom, Phakey, Turung, Khamyang and Khampti. His work also provides a comprehensive account of the possible origins of the Tai people and their common characteristics given their spread over different geographical locations. The work deals with two aspects of Ancient Tai culture. In the first part of the book he describes some the sacrificial rituals of the Tai groups. In the second part he discusses the systems of time-reckoning among the Tai people. The data that he obtained from his documentation of these aspects of culture of the Tai people of Assam, he uses to determine and establish cases of shared tradition among the Tai.

Gogoi’s (1996) ‘Tai of North East India’ is a work on all the Tai community that found in the state of Aruncahal Pradesh and Assam which include the Ahom, Khampti, Phakey, Aiton, Turung and Khamyang. He provides a brief picture of the history of the Tai Khampti, tracing their migration into India, their inter-relation with the Ahom kingdom, their political history during the time of the British administration and a brief comment on their present place of habitation during the current time. He also covers culture and traditions of all the mentioned Tai groups-
their religion, marriage rituals, birth and death rituals, traditional literature, ethno-
botanical aspects of the Tai and so on.

Singh (2013) in his book entitled ‘The Tai Khamptis’ attempted to cover the geo-
political history of the tribe right from the Yunnan Province of China up to the
Tengapani and Sadiya regions of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. The focus of the
book was on the pattern of migration of the Tai Khampti from Myanmar to the
region they occupy at the present in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam covering both
verifiable historical facts and traditional history and legends. Other chapters in the
book include religion, architecture, language, sculpture and the traditional socio-
cultural systems.

Another work which provided some insight into the anthropological and sociological
understanding of the Tai Khampti was the one carried out by the anthropologist
Mishra (1993) who conducted a study on the elite of the society in the period
between 1985-1987. With the assumption that the elites at the local level contribute
significantly to the process of social transformation as the most powerful agents, the
Khampti of Arunachal Pradesh were studied. The study began with the hypothesis
that since the traditional political system is not completely eroded, the traditional
elites may not be giving way to the emergence of new elites having a non-traditional
base. The study found that the elites among the Khampti cross-cut various socio-
economic sections. It was revealed that as much as 46 percent of the elites comprise
of members belonging to only one clan on whom the traditional chieftaincy is
confined whereas 54 percent are drawn from the rest of the clans. He concludes that
the reason for this was not only due to the belief and loyalty to the clan of the chief
due to their high ascribed status but also because of the absolute right over village
resources that they enjoy. The elite status of the Khampti chiefs were maintained by their control of land and forest resources which they use to extend material favours to the Khampti citizens and retain their elite status. His study also highlights an important fact that changes in the Khampti local power structure consequent on the decentralisation of Indian polity could encourage the ‘subject’ clans to challenge the rulers in the process of acquiring power. He noted internal differences – factionalism and mutual rivalry among the Khampti elites but said that despite this they constitute one single unit and all of them have contributed to the process of social transformation in their limited capacities. In general if the education, income, occupation, clan affiliation and political linkages are considered the Khampti elites constitute a minority group of enlightened, conscious and affluent people in contrast to the majority of the Khampti population who depend on the elites for guidance and help. The study identified the Khampti elites as being the vanguards of many reformative attempts like religious integration, technological modernisation, occupational diversification and other socio-political transformations.

The above mentioned literatures are the main works available on the Tai Khampti of Arunachal Pradesh. As no single village study has as yet been conducted on the Tai Khampti an intensive study of local type of the society, its social structure and the processes operating in the village is a necessary and obvious requisite for the proper understanding of the Tai Khampti society of Arunachal Pradesh as a whole.

**The problem:**

Arunachal Pradesh may be termed as a tribal state having 26 major tribes and more than 100 sub tribes with each tribe having their own territory, language and customs. The state has a total population of 1,383,727, out of which the rural population is
1,066,358, that is 77.06 percent of the total population is rural. The majority of the people in the state of Arunachal Pradesh still live in some 5,258 villages (Census 2011). The structure and typologies of villages also differ widely based on each particular tribe. The population of the villages range from less than ten households to more than a few hundreds. There is no uniformity among the different tribes, hence large variations in villages of the different tribes may be found.

As the 24th state of the Indian Union, Arunachal Pradesh was granted statehood on 20th February 1987. This state was virtually left untouched by the British administration and was also one of the last recipients of the social reformers and other movements operating in India during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the past the tribes of the state were referred to as ‘uncouth’, ‘barbaric’ and ‘wild’ by scholars. Such terms refer to a stage in their history when they were technologically, materially and socially much simpler. However with the attainment of statehood the people have been introduced to a vast number of heterogenetic forces of change. Since then changes through agencies such as developmental plans, new political institutions and education have been introduced into the state with the view of integrating the people into the national identity.

Keeping the historical, cultural and economic context of the state of Arunachal Pradesh in mind it has been noted that the vast and rapid changes that are taking place at present in the villages of Arunachal Pradesh, lend a note of urgency to village studies. The importance of village studies has been stressed as a continuing source of importance for the deeper and wider understanding of society, economy and polity in contemporary India. It the light of this context it has been felt necessary to take a detailed study of the traditional and contemporary aspects of a
village in Arunachal Pradesh and the transformations that were claimed to be taking place. Keeping in mind the above discussion an empirical study of Lathao village situated in the Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh was carried out in order to understand its structure. This case study is restricted by the local differences because even among the Tai-Khampti there are variations in the institutions found in the villages. However this in no way diminishes the significance of this case study since establishing a local type provides an essential step in understanding the tribe as a whole. This study is thus by nature a village oriented, micro level aspect of study dealing with a particular village of a particular tribe in Arunachal Pradesh. The study was designed as a descriptive and an exploratory one. The central theme of the study was to project the changes and transformations that were occurring among the Tai Khampti at the level of the village. In order to uncover these facts the focus was on the village as a unit and a case study where the system of institutions and the functional interdependence between different aspects of life which gives rise to the multifaceted interrelationship among the institutions- kinship and marriage, religious, political and economic- were analysed.

**Objectives of the study:**

We have the following broad objectives, namely:-

1. To examine the structural arrangements of the village in terms of the organised pattern of inter-related rights and obligations of persons and groups as reflected in the following institutions- kinship, religious, political and economic institutions of the village.
2. To examine the structural response of the village to external factors like introduction of market system, state policy of development and power structure.

3. To understand the processes of continuity and change as reflected in the various social institutions of the village.

**Area of study:**

The state of Arunachal Pradesh is located between 26.28 N and 29.30 N latitude and 91.20 E and 97.30 E longitude and has an area of 83,743 square kilometres. It borders the states of Assam and Nagaland to the South and shares international boundaries with Bhutan in the West, Myanmar in the east and China in the north. There are 19 districts in the state, Lathao village falls in the newly created district of Namsai. Namsai district is bound by the areas inhabited by the Mishmi in the North (Lohit District), Assam in the south, the Tangsa in the east (Changlang district). The new district comprises the territorial jurisdiction of Namsai, Chowkham, Piyong and Lekang administrative circles. The village is located at a distance of 12 kilometres from the District headquarters of Namsai.

According to the 2011 census the total population of Lathao was 567 households with a total population of 2765 persons. While the Census findings enumerated those figures, we found that there were among this figure only 163 households and 856 persons who were permanent residents of the village holding land and forming a cohesive socio-political unit. Out of the 163 households in the village there were 11 households with a total population of 58 persons belonging to the Tai Khamyang community permanently residing in the village. The Tai Khampti residents comprised of a total of 152 households and a population of 798 persons. The
remaining 404 households comprised of people of different ethnic backgrounds temporarily residing in the village primarily for pursuing their means of livelihood. The largest group in this population comprised of the Adivasi community serving in the tea plantations of the village. The large scale influx of the Adivasi into the area began from the early 1990’s. In terms of population size, they are followed by the Nepali community who primarily work as tenant farmers in the village. Then there is a small group of the Bihari community who serve the village in various capacities as tailor, barber and grocery shop owners. The dynamics of these statistics are more fully dealt with in the fifth and sixth chapters. Based on the objectives of the study we have purposively selected only the permanent residents of the village who own land for residential and cultivation purposes and who participate in the socio-political activities of the village as one unit. The heads of all 163 households of the village formed the respondents of the study as they fulfilled the criteria of our study. The remaining 404 households included by the Census as part of the village were dropped from the list of respondents in keeping with the study’s nature and objectives.

Lathao was chosen for the simple reason that no such studies have been carried out in this village. It is known for being one of the earliest settlements of the Tai Khampti and in terms of population and area is the second largest village in Namsai District. One of the unique characteristic of this village was that it was one of the 8 villages out of a total of 64 identified Khampti villages in the area where the traditional political institution of the Chow pha (chief) was still present and being practiced. In a study of the traditions and change of the Khampti this formed a crucial element of examination since, as will be proved in the following chapters, it forms a defining aspect of their society.
Another interesting characteristic of the village was that it could be qualified as a multi-tribe village since it was one of the few Khampti villages which had also accommodated a minority population of the Tai Khamyang. It was also amongst the first villages in the area where any sort of an industrial set up was established in the form of a tea production centre which gave rise to the influx of tea garden labourers residing in the village belonging to the Adivasi community. Keeping these characteristics in mind we were thus interested to study it as a case of change and continuity of an ideal typical Tai Khampti village. Besides that, the researcher was also a member of the village and this provided the researcher ease to get in touch with the villagers which provided deep insight into the different social processes that take place in the village from close quarters.

**Methodology:**

The data presented in the study are primary data collected from the village. Both primary and secondary data were collected to achieve the results of the study. The primary data was collected from the members of the village, knowledgeable individuals outside the village and state government officials. The data was collected using the instruments of schedule, interview guide and non-participant observation. The focus of data collection was both qualitative and quantitative.

Secondary data was collected from books, articles, journals, census reports, state government documents and other available documents from the Block development office and concerned government Department. Literature in the Khampti script was also used and referred to whenever the researcher could gain access to them.

In order to collect the primary data the heads of all households in the village comprising a total of 163 respondents formed the sample size. To collect the data the
following different schedules for different purpose of the same objective was prepared, namely-

(a) Schedule for the residents of Lathao village

(b) Schedule for the members of the Gram Panchayat members of the village.

(c) Schedule for the chow pha (village chief)

(d) Schedule for the Gaon Bura (headman)

The schedule for the residents of Lathao village had questions on the following areas-

1) Socio-economic background information

2) Information on their economic activities

3) Information regarding marriage and family

The schedule (a) was pre-tested in the village during October 2013 and necessary modifications were made to it. The second set of schedule was for the members of the Gram Panchayat and focused on its structure and function at the level of the village. The third and fourth schedules relating to information on the Chow pha and the Gaon Bura institutions were further supplemented by unstructured in-depth interviews.

Primary data was also collected from various categories of persons both within and outside the village. For this purpose living persons and their interactions and activities in the present social system, those who have seen and experienced the various stages that their society has passed through during their life time and were
reputed to be knowledgeable about the past were selected. The in-depth interview technique was used profusely in both its forms—structured and unstructured. Information on the history of the village was provided by the village chief, the clans who accompanied the village chief during migration from the village of origin and elderly citizens of the village. Information regarding kinship and marriage was gathered from elderly citizens of the village, the chow pachaw (marriage emissary) from Sensap village and observation of marriage ceremonies in the village. For the information on the political aspects of the village in particular and the Khampti in general the village chief, chiefs of other Khampti villages, elderly citizens of the village, the Gaon Bura, knowledgeable elderly people outside the village, executive members of the Tai Khampti Singpho Council and few Government officials was obtained. The village priest, village monks and elderly citizens of the village were interviewed to gather information on religion practiced by the Khampti in general and the village members in particular. The findings on the economy of the village was provided by the village members.

Observation of the year round activities in the religious, agricultural and political sphere of the village was conducted. People’s participation in festivals, in work, and social gatherings were observed. There were many activities of the village such as village level religious festivals and attendance of funeral and marriage ceremonies where the researcher participated to observe the rituals and activities that they involved. For the year round agricultural and political activities and processes of the village non-participant observation method was used. Non participant observation refers to those instances where I did not participate in the activities, such as during village level political meetings where I being a woman was customarily not allowed to take part. Both the participant and non-participant observation method greatly
supplemented the in-depth interviews conducted with the above mentioned cross section of people which aided in corroborating the information provided by them.

**Fieldwork:**

The study was conducted almost intermittently over a course of almost two years from 2013-2015. The interview schedule for the villagers was conducted during the months from May to October of 2014 through personal visits to each household in the village by the researcher. In every interview with the respondents the researcher first explained the objective of the study and requested their cooperation in the work. The villagers were at first puzzled by the researcher’s frequent visits and the questions were mistaken for census related activities. But when it was explained to them the nature of the work, the people gave all their assistance and patiently answered all the questions. Besides the questions in the interview schedule other personal interviews were also made which were not covered by the interview schedule according to the field situation. The interview schedule for the Gram Panchayat members was conducted during January-March 2015. All Gram Panchayat members in the village were interviewed.

Besides these respondents the researcher also conducted in-depth interview with a cross section of people in the village who could contribute in significant ways to the study. In depth interview was conducted on several occasions with the *Chow pha* (chief) of the village, the *chow chere* (village priest), elderly citizens of the village and the village *Gaon Bura* (headman). Besides them interviews were also conducted with the village medical officer, school principal, agricultural department, the circle officer stationed at the village and the small scale businessmen and shopkeepers of the village. Interviews with people from outside the village was also done- *Chow*
pha of other villages, Gaon Bura of neighbouring villages, chow pachaw of Sensap village, executive members of the Khampti Singpho Council, the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Extra Assistant Commissioner of Namsai administrative block and knowledgeable citizens of the Khampti community were sought and interviewed.

These respondents were purposely selected because of the fact they provide maximum opportunity to throw greater insight into the problems of the study.

The researcher had a great advantage in being a member of the village as she could easily gain access to all the respondents in the village and also participate in all the activities of the village that were performed throughout the year without having to obtain permission from village authorities. It did help that the researcher knew the language and both parents being Khampti she was accepted and did not have to establish her credentials. In the course of the field work the researcher was fortunate to get the help and cooperation of the villagers. As a researcher engaged in the study of her own society I was in a position to better comprehend the advantages and disadvantages of my society. At the same time, the same reason may also very likely colour and prejudice the study. It therefore became important for me to be careful and follow scientific objectivity which is free from bias and prejudices. Due to the fact that the researcher was pursuing her education outside the village, visits to the village were only occasional and even contact with the villagers was irregular in nature. Due to this reason the researcher had the advantage of getting a certain degree of objectivity while studying her own people.

During the course of fieldwork an important development that took place was that the District of Lohit, of which the village was formerly a part of, was bifurcated to create another new district known as Namsai District. Namsai is a Khampti word
which is a combination of two words- *nam* which means water and *sai* which means sand named after the town Namsai, which now forms the district headquarters, located at the banks of the Noa Dihing river from where it got its nomenclature. This new district was declared on 15 August 2014 and it was officially inaugurated on 25th November 2014 by the chief minister, Government of Arunachal Pradesh. By creating this new district it distinctly carved the Khampti population into a well defined area as all Khampti villages in the state of Arunachal Pradesh now fall under this district neatly.