

## CHAPTER - FOUR

### SOURCE AND TYPE OF LABOUR

Social formation depends on the social existence form of labour and more explicitly by the type of labour used, source of supply of labour, nature of division of labour, type of payment. In tribal society, labour is supplied mainly by the family or community in reciprocal terms and for which no wage is paid. Some works are carried out jointly by the kinsmen or the community in non-remunerative terms. Work in agriculture is considered as family work and all members irrespective of age and sex do participate in it as per requirement and their capacity.

Division of labour is a capitalistic concept and so it is not the characteristic of tribal society. Under capitalism works in all sectors including in agriculture are divided where trained and efficient workers get maximum return. No such division of labour is there in tribal economy and irrespective of age and sex they do all types of work. Ideally speaking, division of labour, in true sense, is supposed to be absent in tribal society.

In this chapter the different components of labour among the Lepchas have been examined from three broad premises : source of labour, type of labour, and classification of work.

#### 4.1. SOURCE OF LABOUR

In a Lepcha village one gets labour exclusively from within the village and inter-village movement of labour is almost negligible. Labour in Lepcha society is basically mean the household labour. Households in our study area consists of members related either through blood or marriage or adoption. The villagers do not make any difference among these categories of kinsmen living under a common

roof, that is, the household. A household is normally composed of a group of persons who commonly live together and take their meals from a common kitchen unless the exigencies of work prevalent any of them from doing so. There may be a household of related persons by blood or a household of unrelated persons or having a mix of both. There is not much difference between a family and a household in Lepcha society.

Household among the Lepchas confined to purely biological concept of married couple, living together within their descendants and in some cases members of older generations. Two peculiarities have been noticed in the said composition of Lepcha household: (i) presence of good number of unmarried persons (both male and female) and (ii) the adopted children. As household labour both of them play important role in Lepcha society. Let us look into the said composition of the Lepcha households.

#### **4.1.1 AGE AND SEX COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLD**

Household size by their age and sex composition has an important bearing with the supply of labour. Table 4.1 shows the aggregate distribution of households by size, age and sex. The small household within 1-3 members mostly comprises of husband and wife and their unmarried children. After marriage the spouses generally settled in separate establishment.

**Table – 4.1**

**Household size by age and sex of the three villages**

household size	Number of household	Population			0 – 6 years			7 – 14 years			15 – 60 years			Above 60 years		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1-3	17 (14.29)	25 (7.00)	21 (6.18)	46 (6.60)	3 (5.36)	1 (2.44)	4 (4.12)	-	1 (1.56)	1 (0.76)	19 (8.92)	19 (8.92)	38 (8.92)	3 (14.29)	-	3 (6.98)
4-10	91 (76.47)	275 (77.03)	241 (70.88)	516 (74.03)	37 (66.07)	29 (70.73)	66 (68.04)	61 (91.04)	43 (67.19)	104 (79.39)	162 (76.06)	151 (70.89)	313 (73.47)	16 (76.19)	17 (77.27)	33 (76.74)
Above 10	11 (9.24)	57 (15.97)	78 (22.94)	135 (19.37)	16 (28.57)	11 (26.83)	27 (27.84)	6 (8.96)	20 (31.25)	26 (19.85)	32 (15.02)	43 (20.19)	75 (17.61)	2 (9.52)	5 (22.73)	7 (16.28)
Total	119 (100.00)	357 (100.00)	340 (100.00)	697 (100.00)	56 (100.00)	41 (100.00)	97 (100.00)	67 (100.00)	64 (100.00)	131 (100.00)	213 (100.00)	213 (100.00)	426 (100.00)	21 (100.00)	22 (100.00)	43 (100.00)

*(Figures in the parenthesis indicate their percentages to the total).*

The population have been divided in four age groups. The minor age group (0-6 years) cannot help in agriculture. The children belonging to the age group of 7-14 years do help in carrying out a number of agricultural operations. In addition to their principal activities of attending school, a good number of them are involved in agricultural works. The population in the age group of 15-60 years is the full fledged working population and who mainly contribute their labour to agriculture. The smallest proportion of population belongs to the older age group (above 60 years) and whose role restricts mainly to advice, co-ordinate and organise agriculture.

As females do participate equally in agriculture their presence in different age groups help agriculture in different ways. It is evident from Table 4.1 that in each age group the females represent almost equally with the males. Hence, their labour and other contributions to agriculture remain more or less similar to that of their male counterpart.

In Mani Gumpa, the distribution of population over the different age groups reveals nearly the same characteristics to that of the total population. Table 4.2 reveals that largest percentage of population falls in the able bodied working age group of 15-60 years. So far as the household size is concerned, 75.95 per cent of population falls in the category of 4-10 members. It has been seen that the females in all categories contribute more than their male counterpart. It is evident that both the first two age groups are missing from the small sized household. It proves that in such nuclear households the married couples are residing with their parents and all the members are supplying labour to agriculture jointly.

Table – 4.2

Household size by age and sex  
Name of Village : Mani Gumpa

Household size	Number of household	Population			0 – 6 years			7 – 14 years			15 – 60 years			Above 60 years		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1-3	4 (18.18)	4 (7.41)	5 (7.57)	9 (7.50)	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 (7.89)	5 (10.64)	8 (9.41)	1 (20.00)	-	1 (8.33)
4-10	16 (72.72)	41 (75.93)	46 (69.70)	87 (72.50)	1 (33.33)	-	1 (33.33)	8 (100.00)	9 (75.00)	17 (85.00)	28 (73.68)	31 (65.96)	59 (69.41)	4 (80.00)	6 (85.71)	10 (83.34)
Above 10	2 (9.09)	9 (16.66)	15 (22.73)	24 (20.00)	2 (66.67)	-	2 (66.67)	-	3 (25.00)	3 (15.00)	7 (18.42)	11 (23.40)	18 (21.18)	-	1 (14.29)	1 (8.33)
Total	22 (100.00)	54 (100.00)	66 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	3 (100.00)	-	3 (100.00)	8 (100.00)	12 (100.00)	20 (100.00)	38 (100.00)	47 (100.00)	85 (100.00)	5 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	12 (100.00)

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate their percentages to the total).

Table 4.3 shows distribution of population in 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon. Population, both male and female are concentrating more in the middle sized household and that too in the able bodied working age group of 15-60 years. Agriculture in this village like that of the other two villages, thus, has been carried out by this age group. The largest household size ranks second in supplying labour to agricultural operations.

Distribution of population of Pochaok is shown in Table 4.4. It is clear that 73.68 per cent of household and 70.85 per cent of population fall in the middle sized category. The highest proportion of population belongs to the age group of 15-60 years. The sex wise distribution of population is same to those of the two other villages.

The proportion of able bodied person in all the three villages is almost sufficient to meet the requirement of labour engaged in agriculture as principal and subsidiary occupation (66.85 per cent as per Table 2.13). It has been experienced that agriculture remained the main sector of engagement for the Lepchas. As almost all the households (94.06 per cent as per Table 3.5) possess agricultural land and as there is no alternative source of engagement, it can be inferred that Lepchas cultivate land mainly with their village labour. Beside the able bodied age group, the other age groups do extend helping hand in agriculture. The picture is more or less same for each of the three villages individually also. The Lepcha villages are, thus, self sufficient in supplying labour for agriculture.

**Table – 4.3**  
**Household size by age and sex**  
**Name of Village : 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon**

Household size	Number of household	Population			0 – 6 years			7 – 14 years			15 – 60 years			Above 60 years		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1-3	1 (4.76)	1 (1.47)	2 (3.18)	3 (2.29)	-	-	-	-	1 (12.50)	1 (6.67)	1 (1.93)	1 (1.96)	2 (1.94)	-	-	-
4-10	19 (90.48)	59 (86.76)	54 (85.71)	113 (86.26)	1 (200.00)	1 (100.00)	2 (33.33)	7 (100.00)	5 (62.50)	12 (80.00)	48 (92.30)	46 (90.20)	94 (91.26)	3 (75.00)	2 (66.67)	5 (71.43)
Above 10	1 (4.76)	8 (11.77)	7 (11.11)	15 (11.45)	4 (80.00)	-	4 (66.67)	-	2 (25.00)	2 (13.33)	3 (5.77)	4 (7.84)	7 (6.80)	1 (25.00)	1 (33.33)	2 (28.57)
Total	21 (100.00)	68 (100.00)	63 (100.00)	131 (100.00)	5 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	6 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	8 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	52 (100.00)	51 (100.00)	103 (100.00)	4 (100.00)	3 (100.00)	7 (100.00)

*(Figures in the parenthesis indicate their percentages to the total).*

**Table – 4.4**  
**Household size by age and sex**  
**Name of Village : Pochaok**

Household size	Number of household	Population			0 – 6 years			7 – 14 years			15 – 60 years			Above 60 years		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1-3	12 (15.79)	20 (8.51)	14 (6.64)	34 (7.62)	3 (6.25)	1 (2.50)	4 (4.55)	-	-	-	15 (12.19)	13 (11.30)	28 (11.76)	2 (16.67)	-	2 (8.33)
4-10	56 (73.68)	175 (74.47)	141 (66.82)	316 (70.85)	35 (72.92)	28 (70.00)	63 (71.59)	46 (88.46)	29 (65.91)	75 (78.13)	86 (69.92)	74 (64.35)	160 (67.23)	9 (75.00)	9 (75.00)	18 (75.00)
Above 10	8 (10.53)	40 (17.02)	56 (26.54)	96 (21.53)	10 (20.83)	11 (27.50)	21 (23.86)	6 (11.54)	15 (34.09)	21 (21.87)	22 (17.89)	28 (24.35)	50 (21.01)	1 (8.33)	3 (25.00)	4 (16.67)
Total	76 (100.00)	235 (100.00)	211 (100.00)	446 (100.00)	48 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	88 (100.00)	52 (100.00)	44 (100.00)	96 (100.00)	123 (100.00)	115 (100.00)	238 (100.00)	12 (100.00)	12 (100.00)	24 (100.00)

*(Figures in the parenthesis indicate their percentages to the total).*

#### 4.1.2 UNMARRIED MEMBERS

The unmarried children particularly the girls are the key members in some of the Lepcha households. They take part in policy making and economic activities including agricultural operations. The unmarried aged girls in few cases are also the heads of the household. As per Lepcha marriage (*bri*) system, the bridegroom is supposed to approach the bride's family and in this process the matchmaker (*peeboo*) plays an important role. Presence of good number of quite adult/aged unmarried Lepcha girls in the villages is something quite interesting. It is said that they are not approached by the groom for marriage. But the labour contribution of unmarried girls to agriculture might have been found responsible in not taking much initiative in arranging their marriage. It may be noted that average age of marriage among the Lepchas is about 20 years for both the sexes. Detail of unmarried persons belonging to the age group above 20 years is shown in Appendix IV.

Table 4.5 shows the involvement of both bachelor male and female of higher age in agricultural operations as their principal or subsidiary occupation.

It is evident that about 16 per cent people in the study area are unmarried where the percentages of male and female are 15.69 and 15.88 respectively. The proportion of unmarried adult is the highest in 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon (28.24 per cent) followed by Mani Gumpa (20.83 per cent) and Pochaok (10.76 per cent). Higher proportion of unmarried women is there in 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon (30.16 per cent) followed by Mani Gumpa (25.76 per cent) and Pochaok (8.53 per cent). The proportion of unmarried male (12.77 per cent) is more than the female (8.53 per cent) in Pochaok while in other two villages women are more than male.

Table - 4.5

## Involvement of Unmarried child above 20 years in agricultural operations.

Name of village	Sex	Population			Involvement in Agriculture as					
		Total	Unmarried above 20 years	% of total	Principal occupation			Subsidiary occupation		
					Total	Unmarried above 20 years	% of total	Total	Unmarried above 20 years	% of total
Mani Gumpa	Male	54	8	14.81	13	5	38.46	21	2	9.52
	Female	66	17	25.76	21	9	42.86	25	5	20.00
	Total	120	25	20.83	34	14	41.18	46	7	15.22
5 <sup>th</sup> mile Lepcha Gaon	Male	68	18	26.47	20	9	45.00	22	2	9.09
	Female	63	19	30.16	15	2	13.33	23	9	39.13
	Total	131	37	28.24	35	11	31.43	45	11	24.44
Pochaok	Male	235	30	12.77	126	30	23.81	42	-	-
	Female	211	18	8.53	7	4	57.14	131	12	9.16
	Total	446	48	10.76	133	34	25.56	173	12	6.94
Total	Male	357	56	15.69	159	44	27.67	85	4	4.71
	Female	340	54	15.88	43	15	34.88	179	26	14.53
	Total	697	110	15.78	202	59	29.21	264	30	11.36

The involvement of unmarried adults in agricultural operation is shown in Table 4.5. Out of total labour engaged in agriculture as principal occupation, the contribution of unmarried persons is 29.21 per cent. In this the contribution of female (34.88 per cent) is higher than male (27.67 per cent). In Mani Gumpa females contribute more (41.18 per cent) in agriculture than in 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon (31.43 per cent) and Pochaok (25.56, per cent).

The participation of unmarried adult in agriculture as subsidiary occupation is somewhat less. Out of total population accepted agriculture as subsidiary occupation the proportion of unmarried adult is 11.36 per cent. But the contribution of female is more (14.53 per cent) than males (4.71 per cent). Females contribute more labour than their male counterpart in all the three villages. It has been observed that the Lepcha women are principally engaged in household activities and do participate in agriculture subsidiarily, while for the majority of males agriculture is their principal occupation.

The need of household labour in agriculture might have restricted the aged female Lepchas not to get married and leave the house. This is possibly a contributing factor in limiting the growth of Lepcha population. The unmarried adults of any kinship category are the most welcomed members in the household and in most cases they shoulder the entire burden of agricultural operations.

#### **4.1.3 ADOPTED MEMBER**

Another potential contributor of labour in Lepcha agriculture is adopted child (*Kup-trop*), particularly the male child. Details of adopted child are shown in Appendix-I. The adopted children are the most reliable source of household labour in agriculture and can comfortably substitute the wage or contractual labour. Instead of appointing agricultural labour on monthly or yearly wage basis, the Lepchas

prefer adopted child. In the household an adopted child gets equal facilities as enjoyed by their own child except their ownership right on land. The adopted boy or girl has been conversed to Lepcha by embracing the *moo* of his or her step father (*jiut-be*) or step mother (*jiut-mu*). They also enjoy the status of scheduled tribe (ST). In most cases they manage ST certificate from the concerned department and avail special facilities specified for STs in the school and in employment. The adopted children are involved in the activities of the household in such a way it is difficult to differentiate their separate existence. The adopted children are however, given only a small plot of land for habitation whereas the cultivated land is equally distributed exclusively among their own children. In case the parents are, without any issue their adopted children inherit the entire landed property. Let us discuss about the involvement of adopted children in agricultural operations.

Table 4.6 shows village-wise distribution of adopted children. It is evident that almost all the adopted children belong to 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon while only one to Mani Gumpa. In Pochaok there is no such child. Out of seven adopted children in 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon, six are male and one is female. All the adopted children are involved in agriculture. For five of them agriculture is their principal occupation while for the rest it is subsidiary one.

**Table – 4.6**  
**Involvement of Adopted Child in Agricultural operations**

Name of village	Sex	Population			Involvement in Agriculture as					
		Total	Adopted child	% of total	Principal occupation			Subsidiary occupation		
					Total	Adopted child	% of total	Total	Adopted child	% of total
Mani Gumpa	Male	54	1	1.85	13	1	7.69	21	-	-
	Female	66	-	-	21	-	-	25	-	-
	Total	120	1	0.83	34	1	2.94	46	-	-
5 <sup>th</sup> mile Lepcha Gaon	Male	68	6	8.82	20	4	20.00	22	2	9.09
	Female	63	1	1.59	15	-	-	23	1	4.35
	Total	131	7	5.34	35	4	11.43	45	3	6.67
Pochaok	Male	235	-	-	126	-	-	42	-	-
	Female	211	-	-	7	-	-	131	-	-
	Total	446	-	-	133	-	-	173	-	-
Total	Male	357	7	1.96	159	5	3.14	85	2	2.35
	Female	340	1	0.29	43	-	-	179	1	0.56
	Total	697	8	1.15	202	5	2.48	264	3	1.14

Interestingly, all the adopted children are non-Lepchas. Three of them have settled in the village on the plot of land given to them by their step fathers. Some aged bachelor adopted children live quite comfortably with the other members of the household. It is perhaps the need of the labour in agriculture which prompted the households to adopt the male child. The households with larger agricultural lands are more inclined to adopt male child. They prefer to adopt child instead of going for appointing monthly or yearly contractual labour.

## **4.2 TYPE OF LABOUR**

Labour in Lepcha society can be classified into three broad types : household labour, wage labour and exchange labour. But for all practical considerations they are not mutually exclusive categories. All types of labour employment remain confined within the village. It is the same person who at times participates in agriculture as household labour often works as wage labour, and exchange labour. Often in the same household when some members act as household labour some others function as wage or exchange labour. In this section we have tried to put some light on the three types of labour in Lepcha society.

### **4.2.1 HOUSEHOLD LABOUR**

Lepchas prefer to cultivate their own and or leased in land with the help of household labour. Column 5 and 6 of Table 3.2 show the pattern of land management by the owner cultivator and owner cultivator cum share cropper. In both the cases the operations are done basically by the household labour. When it is not sufficiently available (due either because of small size of household or possession of large cultivable land), Lepchas go for both wage labour or exchange labour.

No direct payment is made to the household labour. As agriculture is the mainstay of livelihood of the Lepchas, they want to keep themselves engaged in the activities centering around it. In other words, it is basically the peasant farming where the potential household members supply labour and produce crops to meet the consumption need of the household. In this system all the members irrespective of their contribution to cultivation equally enjoy the return from agriculture. Household members by their sex and age participate in different agricultural operations. The young male members normally undertake comparatively arduous works like ploughing, carrying of crops, use of shovel or spade. The women, on the other hand, do less arduous works like plucking of seedlings, transplantation, weeding. The aged male members often advise and share their experience at different stages of agricultural operations. They according to their physical capacity do accompany the working force in the field either as additional helping hands or as companion who entertain and encourage others by telling stories, sharing experiences. The school going children also do participate in the cultivation of their field mainly during peak seasons. They normally involve in less laborious operations like weight during levelling, or in transplanting, weeding and plucking. From early morning to late evening as per requirement and availability of labour, the Lepchas keep themselves busy in their field operations.

The male members of each Lepcha household consider agriculture as their principal occupation while the females and children in most cases consider agriculture as subsidiary sector of engagement. Choden Lepcha of Mani Gumpa, graduated in 1987 narrates : "I applied several times for government jobs but nobody consider my candidature. I have lost all the hopes for any job and at present have chosen agriculture as a profitable sector of engagement. Now I am not getting any

free time from my gladioli field and I am happy that I could engage other in my farm on wage basis". It has been observed (Table 2.14) that only 12.91 per cent people are engaged in off farm activities. Thus, agriculture remains as the principal sector of engagement and earnings and where most of the Lepchas cultivate their own land with the help of household labour.

#### 4.2.2 WAGE LABOUR

Mainly the landless Lepchas work as agricultural wage labour. The small and medium landowners with more household members normally sell their labour on wage basis. Lepchas enjoy wage labour mainly for cash crops like cardamom, gladioli and vegetable. Earlier the use of wage labour for food crops was almost absent. But recently some changes have been noticed in this regard. Lepchas (mainly large and medium landowners) with inadequate household labour cultivate their land with the help of wage labour. They deploy wage labour in the cultivation of both cash and food crops.

Unlike the other two types of labour, wage labour is employed even from outside the village and from other communities. During the peak agricultural season, the Lepchas usually invite other community labours from outside. For some special types of work, particularly for newer variety of crops, the outside labours are found to be more efficient. Introduction of newer variety of crops, like gladioli, vegetables has increased the rate of use of outside labours. The self sufficiency among the Lepchas in terms of labour employment, thus, cannot simply sustain. The Lepcha economy has become a part of wider economic system along with the cultivation of cash crops and where they use good number of wage labour from outside.

Wages paid to the agricultural labours vary according to their age and sex. Works are classified and labours are employed on the basis of age and sex. Wage

even for the same type of work may vary on the basis of age and sex of the labour.

The usual wage paid to the different types of labour are as follows :

Types of labour	Wage per man day
Adult male labour	Rs.30/-
Adult female labour	Rs.25/-
Child labour of both sex	Rs.20/-

Wage labour works for 8 hours in a day from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. with an hour lunch break at noon (12.00 noon to 1.00 p.m.).

Some Lepchas who cultivate cash crops prefer wage labour than exchange labour. Labo Tshering Lepcha of Mani Gumpa considers "wage labour comparatively cheaper and more productive than exchange labour. Nobody takes exchange labour seriously and usually join and leave work according to their convenient time. The number of heads irrespective of age and sex are important than the productive capacity of the heads. All kinds of labour of all age and sex are weighted equally in exchange labour. Even one bullock can be used and exchanged equally with one human labour of any age and sex. Although we do not pay anything in terms of cash or kind but we need to entertain them with tiffin and lunch which altogether adds more than what we pay for the wage labour". It has been observed that Lepchas need to supply *chi* (indigenous drink) to such a labour which involves more cost. So, there is a tendency to move from exchange labour to wage labour even for food crops in Lepcha villages.

Beside payment in cash, in some cases particularly in paddy cultivation, wages are paid in kind. But here a labour requires to wait till the harvesting of paddy. For one days labour he/she is remunerated with one *tungfri* (four kg.) of paddy irrespective of age and sex. Landless labour or household with dry land

generally prefers to work against payment in paddy. Households with surplus labour do not require to exchange labour while small sized households with large holding are not in a position to supply labour but they are in need of labour to run their cultivation. Exchange of labour for paddy, thus, benefits both the parties.

Introduction of wage labour in the cultivation of cash crops has taken the Lepchas away from their dependence on and arrangement of community labour offered on exchange basis. Recently, the Lepchas have started engaging casual labour from outside the community on daily wage basis. The shift from food to cash crop has possibly accelerated this process of new type of labour employment in Lepcha society.

#### 4.2.3 EXCHANGE LABOUR

The system of labour exchange is popularly known as *tyaolmaatheong* in Lepcha. It is a reciprocal method of labour supply in the study area. The term *tyaolmaath* means to help or to co-operate. This is perhaps one of the traditional arrangements of mutual existence. A kind of communal understanding and mutual help among the Lepchas still have been maintained through mutual exchange of labour in agriculture. It is a part of their old culture and a sign of unity and integrity in the Lepcha society.

Labour is exchanged in the cultivation of traditional variety of crops like paddy, maize and millet. Labour of any age and sex is exchangeable. No records are maintained on equitable exchange of labour. On that aspect no dispute or disparity has ever been brought to our notice. In a number of cases, labours received for one crop have been exchanged with the co-partner at the time of next crop or next year. It is true that when a comparison between an adult male and a girl child labour

cannot be made but in Lepcha society all of them are treated equally under labour exchange mode.

Labour exchange system is not all that is acceptable in the case of commercial crops like gladioli, cardamom and vegetable. Here the Lepchas prefer wage labour than exchange labour. The underlying reasons have been discussed in the section of wage labour. Even in the case of food crops some Lepchas prefer wage labour than exchange labour.

Lepchas often exchange human labour against the use of draught-animals from others. Details of animal labour have been discussed in chapter five. It has been observed that only a few households (3 out of 22 in Mani Gumpa, 3 out of 21 in 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon and 17 out of 76 in Pochaok) possess bullocks. Those who receive the service of bullock usually pay back it by extending their own labour. A person enjoys the labour day of a ploughman and a pair of bullock in lieu of three human labour days. Usually the large and middle sized landowner who possess bullock go for such type of labour exchange. Such an exchange benefits both the parties who possess bullock and who do not.

Among the Lepchas other non-agricultural works are also done by exchanging labour. The usual works involved in this category are : construction of houses, repairing and painting of houses, cutting down trees and hewing them for firewood etc..

Labour in these categories are not always mutually exchanged. The Lepchas generally extend their services to others as and when required without keeping any record of number of days or types of work done. Young male members are commonly used for these types of works and they are entertained with tiffin, tea and lunch. The aforesaid works are mostly carried out during off agricultural season and

the Lepchas irrespective of *moo* or religious background do mutually extend labour to one another.

Matrices for reciprocal exchange of labour for agricultural and non-agricultural purposes for the two villages (Mani Gumpa and 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon) are shown in Appendices V, VI, VII and VIII respectively. The reciprocal exchange of labour for Pochaok could not be arrested in terms of such matrix because of its large number of households.

The matrices reveal that the system of reciprocal exchange of labour on the average for all the households are more (nearly double) for non-agricultural purposes than for agricultural ones. There are some households (six in Mani Gumpa and five in 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon) for which no such relations have been established for agricultural purposes but all the households in both the villages are related with others in terms of labour exchange for non-agricultural works. Some households do not possess any cultivable land and extend labour in agriculture on wage basis. But they always go for reciprocal labour exchange with some other for non-agricultural activities.

Considering the reciprocal exchange of labour for both the agricultural and non-agricultural purposes together we can identify the Lepcha villages as a compact unit of society where labour is exchanged without any social, political, religious or economic differences. Religion, *moo*, household size, economic solvency, educational standard do not stand any way to extend and receive labour services. Only in case of religious festivals and functions, labour is available from within the same religious denomination and faith. But religion does not stand in the way in exchanging labour for agricultural purposes.

### 4.3 CLASSIFICATION OF WORK

Division of labour is a modern capitalist concept where works are divided among the workers as per efficiency and productivity. In peasant economy; in general and in tribal peasant economy in particular, labours are not getting any training for becoming efficient for any particular job. This is more true in the case of agriculture where people learn the work through observation, involvement and experience. No arrangements are made for training the individual to become an agricultural labour:

Another peculiarity with agricultural labour is in respect of the types of work. Unlike the secondary or tertiary sector, labour in agricultural sector do not know only one particular type of work but they need to know all types of work associated with agricultural operation. The nature of work depends on the type of crop and the season. Some operations are common for all types of crops whereas a few others are peculiar to specific crop.

Different types of work are involved in agriculture. Among them some are undoubtedly arduous. Also there are comparatively soft and lighter works. Workers mostly spend the day in the open field where they encounter with different natural odds like sunshine, rain, cold. The work in the Lepcha agriculture can be classified in different categories. Different types of works are performed by different persons on the basis of their age, sex and experience.

Most of the adult male members of the Lepcha household contribute labour in their own land and agriculture. Almost all the households possess agricultural land and its male members accept agriculture as their way of life. A higher percentage of adult males among the Lepchas consider agriculture as their principal or subsidiary occupation.

The Lepcha women are also taking more or less equal part in various agricultural operations except some hard works like ploughing and levelling. Those who do not actively participate in the outdoor field operations also help indirectly by performing many indoor works related to agriculture and allied activities.

The child labour is a part and parcel of Lepcha agriculture. Although the Lepcha children participate in agriculture occasionally, but their contribution cannot be ignored altogether. During school holidays or off time they keep themselves engaged in different agricultural activities. During the peak season some Lepcha students, instead of attending school do participate in agricultural activities. No hard works are normally carried out by the children. Works like carrying tea, tiffin to the field, keeping birds or cattle away from the field, caring cattle at the shed are often done by the children. They actively assist their parents in all types of lighter agricultural works like transplantation of seedlings, in weeding, plucking fruits etc.

Let us now discuss in brief how different agricultural operations for different crops are carried out by the Lepchas on the basis of age and sex.

#### 4.3.1 PADDY (ZO)

Paddy is staple food for the Lepchas. Depending on the availability of wet land (*zo-nyaot*) with black soil (*farnuk*), Lepchas cultivate paddy (*zo*) in all the three study villages. The terrace fields (*thafaong*) which are near the rivulate (*ung-kyoong*) and comparatively flat (*taom*) are suitable for paddy. In Mani Gumpa the younger generation is in favour of cultivation of gladioli instead of paddy while the elders prefer to stick to paddy. Gladioli as a substitute to paddy has already entered in the village and the youngs are trying to earn more cash from this new crop. The entire lower Pochaok and greater part of 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon are used for paddy.

Inspite of the introduction of new crops paddy remains the single largest crop in the study area.

**Table – 4.7**  
**Lepcha Agricultural operations and classification of work.**  
**Name of Crop : Paddy (Zo)**

Sl. No.	Name of Operations			Classification of work			
	English	Nepali	Lepcha	Bullock	Male	Female	Child
1	Cleaning	<i>Ali Tashnu</i>	<i>Pachu Plyaok Syaong</i>		√		
2	Ploughing	<i>Zotnu</i>	<i>Oang long maa syaong</i>	√	√		
3	Levelling	<i>Hilaumu</i>	<i>Fanoak Vo Syaong</i>		√		
4	Making ridge	<i>Ali Lagaumu</i>	<i>Pacha kaa Syaong</i>		√	√	
5	Levelling	<i>Dade</i>	<i>Tset Syaong</i>	√	√		√
6	Levelling	<i>Bause</i>	<i>Hormu</i>		√		
7	Transplanting	<i>Ropnu</i>	<i>Zo chaok Syaong</i>		√	√	√
8	Playing with mud	<i>Mato Chitaumu</i>	<i>Faazi Laam Syaong</i>		√	√	√
9	Weeding	<i>Gornu</i>	<i>Zo Buk/Sat Syaong</i>		√	√	√
10	Harvesting	<i>Katnu</i>	<i>Ek Syaong</i>		√	√	
11	Threshing	<i>Bitu Jharnu</i>	<i>Buk Syaong</i>		√	√	
12	Weighting	<i>Napnu</i>	<i>Naop Syaong</i>		√		
13	Carrying	<i>Boknu</i>	<i>Boo Syaong</i>		√		
14	Stacking	<i>Paraldai Karnu</i>	<i>Tang Syaong</i>		√		
15	Storing	<i>Bhara ma Raknu</i>	<i>Zo Tho Syaong</i>		√	√	

The major works involved in paddy cultivation are shown in Table 4.7. The adult male labours participate in all the operations connected with paddy. The less labourious works are performed by the females and children. Men are found indispensable for paddy cultivation. Although in some cases like making ridges, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, threshing, weighting the males work along with the females but some works like cleaning, ploughing, levelling are exclusively done by the males. In transplanting and weeding the contribution of females is more important. Those operations can be done more patiently and carefully by the women.

The work of children is must for levelling where two children of same weight are to sit on either sides of the pointed leveller so as to dig the pointed portion inside the earth. The labour contribution of children and females cannot be underestimated in paddy cultivation of Lepchas.

#### **4.3.2 SOYABEAN (*SLYAANG*), DAL (*KLA*) AND *MORSHEM* (*PORBENG*)**

Along with paddy, Lepchas cultivate the above three crops in the same field. On the terrace wall of the paddy field, Lepchas cultivate soyabean (*slyang*) while on the ridges of the field dal (*kla*) and *morshem* (*porbeng*) are cultivated. These small places and patches were kept unused by the Lepchas in the earlier days. But the scarcity of land compels them to use land where ever is available to them irrespective of its amount.

Lepchas broadcast seeds of dal nearly 10-15 days after the transplantation of paddy and harvest them one week before the harvest of paddy. No interculture is required for these crops. As the works of the aforesaid crops are performed during the off season, the male members complete the necessary task during their leisure. The work of threshing and storing are carried out mainly by the females inside the house while the children extend their helping hands.

#### **4.3.3 MAIZE (*KUN-TSOONG*)**

Maize (*kun-tsoong*) is the second popular staple food for the rural Lepchas. It is cheaper than rice, contains high calories and is used in variety of food preparations. Beside staple food, maize is used as fodder for cattle (cow, pig, hen, goat). By removing the soft skin around the maize with the help of wooden grinder (*tuk-tsoam*) – pestle (*talling*) and stone grinder (*tukvaar*), Lepchas prepare a paste like cake which they use for rituals and daily consumption.

Table – 4.8

## Agricultural operations and classification of work.

Name of Crop : Maize (*Kun-tsoong*)

Sl. No.	Name of Operations			Classification of work			
	English	Nepali	Lepcha	Bullock	Male	Female	Child
1	Ploughing	<i>Zotmu</i>	<i>Long-maa-syaong</i>	√	√		
2	Pulverishing	<i>Dalla Thoknu</i>	<i>Paang Koang Buk/Fanoak Vo Syaong</i>		√		
3	Levelling	<i>Dade</i>	<i>Tset Syaong</i>	√	√		√
4	Broadcasting	<i>Makai Charaumu</i>	<i>Kun-tsoong Lee Syaong</i>		√	√	
5	Furrowing	<i>Line Banaumu</i>	<i>Faat Thaap Syaong</i>		√	√	
6	Sowing	<i>Ropnu</i>	<i>Chaok Syaong</i>		√	√	
7	Weeding	<i>Gornu</i>	<i>Sat/Buk Syaong</i>		√	√	√
8	Ridge Making	<i>Matolagaumu</i>	<i>Faat/Thaap Syaong</i>		√	√	
9	Plucking	<i>Tipnu</i>	<i>Oat Syaong</i>			√	√
10	Storing	<i>Than karnu</i>	<i>Tho Syaong</i>		√	√	

Table 4.8 shows the works performed by male, female and child in maize cultivation. Works like ploughing, pulverising, levelling are done absolutely by the males. Females along with the males do the works like broadcasting, furrowing, sowing, weeding and storing. Children along with males help in levelling and assist female workers in plucking.

#### 4.3.4 MILLET (*MAONG*)

Millet (*maong*) is a traditional crop of the Lepchas. It is a crop of dry land. Millet is used for preparing *chi* (local liquor) which Lepchas consume in all social, religious and even in daily consumption. Traditionally, the dry lands were used for millet cultivation only. Although the land under the coverage of millet has decreased drastically, but still a good number of Lepchas cultivate it.

Table – 4.9  
Agricultural operations and classification of work.

Name of Crop : Millet (*Maong*)

Sl. No.	Name of Operations			Classification of work			
	English	Nepali	Lepcha	Bullock	Male	Female	Child
1	Ploughing	<i>Zotnu</i>	<i>Long-maa-syaong</i>	√	√		
2	Pulverishing	<i>Dalla Thoknu</i>	<i>Paang Koang Buk/Fanoak Vo Syaong</i>		√	√	
3	Levelling	<i>Dade</i>	<i>Tset Syaong</i>	√	√		√
4	Transplanting	<i>Ropnu</i>	<i>Chaok Syaong</i>		√	√	√
5	Harvesting	<i>Katnu</i>	<i>Ek Syaong</i>			√	√
6	Threshing	<i>Pitnu</i>	<i>Maong Buk Syaong</i>			√	√
7	Storing	<i>Thankarnu</i>	<i>Maong Tho Syaong</i>			√	√

Comparatively less number of operations are required in the millet cultivation (see Table 4.9). Works in millet cultivation are performed equally by the male, female and child. Beside works like ploughing, levelling and transplanting all other works are done by the female and child labours. The contribution of females and children are more significant in the cultivation of millet than that of other crops. Male workers complete the first phase of operation while all remaining works in the later phase are performed jointly by the female and child labours.

#### 4.3.5 GINGER (*HENG*)

Ginger (*heng*) is one of the important cash crops of the region. This is the crop from which the Lepchas fetch the return twice – once by selling the mother seed and then by selling the final crop. In spite of the double return, Lepchas in recent days have reduced the cultivation of ginger due to its diseases. Lepchas of Pochaok are cultivating ginger while it is nil in the other two villages.

Table – 4.10  
Agricultural operations and classification of work.

Name of Crop : Ginger (*Heng*)

Sl. No.	Name of Operations			Classification of work			
	English	Nepali	Lepcha	Bullock	Male	Female	Child
1	Ploughing	<i>Zotmu</i>	<i>Long-maa-syaong</i>	√	√		
2	Pulverishing	<i>Dalla Thoknu</i>	<i>Paang Koang Buk/Fanoak Vo Syaong</i>		√		
3	Levelling	<i>Dade</i>	<i>Tset Syaong</i>	√	√		√
4	Sowing	<i>Ropmu</i>	<i>Chaok Syaong</i>		√		
5	Weeding	<i>Gornu</i>	<i>Sat/Buk Syaong</i>		√	√	√
6	Collecting mother	<i>Mau-Nikalnu</i>	<i>Aamoo heng Do Syaong</i>		√		
7	Row making	<i>Mato Lagaumu</i>	<i>Faat/Thaap Sydong</i>		√	√	
8	Harvesting	<i>Bachha Khanaunu</i>	<i>Aa Kup Do Syaong</i>		√		
9	Seed storing	<i>Bue Raknu</i>	<i>Le Lap Syaong</i>		√		

It can be said (Table 4.10) in ginger cultivation the males are weighted heavily and all works are assigned to them. Few works of less importance are done by the female and child workers.

#### 4.3.6 CARDAMOM (*TAMBRAK*)

It is the most important plantation crop among the Lepchas of Pochaok. The black soil along with shade, moderate warmth, sufficient water are necessary conditions for the cultivation of cardamom. It is reported by some [Gowloog, 1995 : 40] that there is no Lepcha name for cardamom and they use the term *alaichi* (Nepali term) which indicates that this is not an indigenous crop of the Lepchas. But the Lepchas of Pochaok where cardamom is cultivated in abundance, termed it *tambrak*. Villagers do not know from where it is imported, but they say that they have been cultivating it since time immemorial.

Table – 4.11  
Agricultural operations and classification of work.

Name of Crop : Cardamom (*Tan brak*)

Sl. No.	Name of Operations			Classification of work			
	English	Nepali	Lepcha	Bullock	Male	Female	Child
1	Cleaning	<i>Safa kurnu</i>	<i>Sat Syaong</i>		√		
2	Ploughing	<i>Zotnu</i>	<i>Long-maa-Syaong</i>	√	√		
3	Levelling	<i>Dade</i>	<i>Tset Syaong</i>	√	√		√
4	Transplanting	<i>Ropnu</i>	<i>Chaok Syaong</i>		√		
5	Cleaning	<i>Farnu</i>	<i>Prek/Ek Syaong</i>		√	√	
6	Plucking	<i>Tipnu</i>	<i>Oat Syaong</i>		√	√	
7	Cleaning	<i>Farnu</i>	<i>Prek/Ek Syaong</i>		√	√	
8	Drying	<i>Surkaumu</i>	<i>Phak Syet Syaong</i>			√	√

All works involved in cardamom cultivation except drying are done by the male workers while females and children perform less important works as a helping hand.

#### 4.3.7 GLADIOLI

Like cardamom in Pochaok and vegetables in 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon, the Lepchas of Mani Gumpa have started considering gladioli as their main cash crop. The elderly people are still guided by their traditional outlook and deny shifting to gladioli leaving traditional crops like paddy, maize and millet. At present, there are eleven households who consider it as a most important profitable cash crop. Over the years more lands are coming under gladioli cultivation. Gladioli gives monetary returns twice – (i) by selling the sticks bearing flower and (ii) by selling the globular base of the stem known as bulb (*aapaam*) which is used as seed for next year.

Table – 4.12  
Agricultural operations and classification of work.  
Name of Crop : Gladioli

Sl. No.	Name of Operations			Classification of work			
	English	Nepali	Lepcha	Bullock	Male	Female	Child
1	Ploughing	<i>Zotmu</i>	<i>Long-maa Syaong</i>	√	√		
2	Pulverising	<i>Dalla Thoknu</i>	<i>Paang Koang Buk/Fanoak Va Syaong</i>		√	√	
3	Levelling	<i>Dade</i>	<i>Tset Syaong</i>	√	√		√
4	Making Row	<i>Line Banamu</i>	<i>Faat/Thaap Syaong</i>		√	√	
5	Planting Bulb	<i>Ropnu</i>	<i>Aapaam Chaok Syaong</i>		√		
6	Weeding	<i>Gornu</i>	<i>Buk/Sat Syaong</i>		√	√	
7	Irrigating	<i>Pani Lagaumu</i>	<i>Oang Thaap Syaong</i>		√		
8	Cutting stick	<i>Phul Katnu</i>	<i>Ek Syaong</i>		√		
9	Extracting bulb	<i>Bulb Uithamu</i>	<i>Aapaam Plya Syaong</i>		√		
10	Storing	<i>Bue Rakmu</i>	<i>Aapaam Tho Syong</i>		√		

Table 4.12 shows different operations of gladioli cultivation as performed by male, female and child labour. It is well evident that males take active part in all types of operations while females and children are involved in less important and less labourious works. Involvement of the children are limited in levelling the filed along with bullocks and ploughmen.

#### 4.3.8 VEGETABLES (*BIFONG*)

Lepchas of 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon consider vegetables (*bifong*) as their main cash crop. They mainly produce potato (*alubuk*), cucumber (*saret*), cabbage (*kagibi*), cauliflower (*riburn*), tomato (*birupaot*), radish (*laa-pup*), chilli (*sang kaar*), bean (*tuk-bit*), squash (*su-koos*), sweet pumpkin (*tangut*) and mustard leaves (*pachebi*).

Table - 4.13

## Agricultural operations and classification of work.

Name of Crop : Vegetables (*Bifong*)

Sl. No.	Name of Operations			Classification of work			
	English	Nepali	Lepcha	Bullock	Male	Female	Child
1	Ploughing	<i>Zotnu</i>	<i>Long-maa Syaong</i>	√	√		
2	Pulverising	<i>Dalla Thoknu</i>	<i>Paang Koang Buk/Fanoak Va Syaong</i>		√	√	
3	Levelling	<i>Dade</i>	<i>Tset Syaong</i>	√	√		√
4	Broadcasting seed	<i>Bijan Charaumu</i>	<i>Le Paat Syaong</i>		√	√	
5	Irrigating	<i>Pani Lagaumu</i>	<i>Oang Thaap Syaong</i>		√	√	
6	Weeding	<i>Gornu</i>	<i>Buk/Sat Syaong</i>		√	√	√
7	Row making	<i>Mato Lagaumu</i>	<i>Faat Thaap Syaong</i>		√	√	√
8	Irrigating	<i>Pani Lagaumu</i>	<i>Oang Thaap Syaong</i>		√	√	
9	Pluck/Harvesting	<i>Katnu/Tipnu</i>	<i>Oat/Ek Syaong</i>			√	√

In vegetable cultivation (Table 4.13) all types of work except plucking of fruits are done by the male workers while females and children are involved in number of soft operations. Vegetables need constant nursing where females and children particularly household members are found to be most suitable.

Lepchas cultivate both food and cash crops. The common crops in all the three villages are paddy, maize and millet. But the three villages differ in terms of their cultivation of cash crops. Cardamom and ginger are the two main cash crops in Pochaok while it is vegetable and gladioli for 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon and Mani Gumpa respectively. The different crops demand different types of operations and participation by age and sex.

In general, all works with bullocks are performed by the adult male members. The children help in levelling the field as weight on both sides of the ladder (pointed for wet land and plain for dry land). No such works are performed

by the females. There are several works which can be done absolutely by the males. Some works are performed solely by the females. It has been noted that comparatively more works are performed by the male members in cultivating cash crops while the role of females and children are more in case of food crops. The work of males often considered as principal type of involvement while for the females it is of subsidiary nature. Works of children are accepted as assistance and by their involvement, they get training in agricultural operations.

#### 4.4 AGRICULTURAL HOLIDAYS

“We are not employees so as to enjoy holidays or vacation like you. We work in the field and have to attend the crop as per its requirements. Work at proper time is very important for agriculture. We cannot wait even for a single day in case of some agricultural operations. We need to meet the demands of the crop at proper time and quantity. Agriculture is our way of life and we engage ourselves in cultivation throughout the year without any rest whatsoever. But as you know, agriculture is seasonal, we do enjoy leisure. We cannot take leave as you can according to your personal need”. It was a logical statement by Pascal Lepcha of Pochaok while enquiring about agricultural holidays.

It is true that Lepchas need to attend the crop as per its requirements but cross section data in the study area reveal that they do enjoy holidays in agriculture. Guided by the tradition, convention and religious beliefs, Lepchas and their bullocks remain off the field. Lepchas are sharply divided in two religious faiths – Buddhism and Christianity. The list of agricultural holidays are more clear among the Christian Lepchas than among the Buddhists. All the Lepchas of 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Lepcha Gaon and 68.38 per cent of Pochaok are Christians. Their list of holidays is shown in Table 4.14.

**Table – 4.14**  
**Agricultural Holiday (for Christians)**

Sl. No.	Occasions	Days and date	No. of days
1	Sunday	All	52 days
2	Good Friday	April	3 days
3	Christmas and New Years	December 20 – January 5	12 days
4	Church Activities	-	15 days
Total			82 days

Almost all the Lepchas of Mani Gumpa (95.00 per cent) and 31.61 per cent of Pochaok are Buddhists. Their list of holidays in agricultural operations is shown in Table 4.15.

**Table – 4.15**  
**Agricultural Holiday (for Buddhists)**

Sl. No.	Occasions	Months and Days	No. of Days
1	<i>Lirun Faat</i>	April – May	3 days
2	<i>Sekeor Rum Faat</i>	April – May	1 day
3	<i>Sekeor Rum Faat</i>	November – Dec.	1 day
4	<i>Gaeboo Achyok's Birthday</i>	20 Dec.	1 day
5	<i>Nambun</i>	December	10 days
6	<i>Rong Dung git</i>	Jan, 26	1 day
7	<i>Intensurup</i>	May	1 day
8	<i>Buddha Purima</i>	May, Dec.	2 days
9	<i>Mane</i>	May, Dec.	2 days
10	<i>Chu chu</i>	May, Dec.	2 days
11	<i>Muk Zik Ding Rum Faat</i>	21 Feb	1 day
12	<i>Tendong Lho-Rum Faat</i>	8 Aug.	1 day
13	First day after hail storm	-	1 day
14	<i>Lyaang Rum Faat</i>	April 1	2 days
15	<i>Sugi</i>	-	1 day
Total			30 days

In addition to the above list, both the Buddhists and Christians remain off the field in the event of :

- a) Any death in the village
- b) Any birth of new baby in the village
- c) Unfavourable natural conditions
- d) Diseases at home (individual)
- e) Unforeseen uncertainties

It is clear that Christian Lepchas enjoy more agricultural holidays and engaged in religious activities than their Buddhist counterpart.