

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC SURVEY OF LA-CHEN AND LA-CHUNG

On the basis of the economic survey of La-chen and La-chung undertaken by us, the following two tables can be prepared separately. The tables present the number of families and the number of family members in each family in the size groups of 2-5 members and 5-10 and above with their monthly incomes, their sources of income, and whether the families are polyandrous or polygamous.

The two tables are presented in 13.1 and 13.2.

From the tables 13.1 and 13.2 it is known that the number of families in the smaller size group of 2-5 members in both the valleys is greater than in the larger group of 5-10 members and above. In La-chen valley, the number is 63 in the former and 37 in the latter whereas La-chung has 56 families in the former and in the latter and 44.

The income level in both the sizes of families has been bracketed into five groups-

- 1) Below Rs. 500
- 2) Rs. 500 - Rs. 1000
- 3) Above Rs. 1000 - less than Rs. 2000
- 4) Rs. 2000 - Rs. 3000
- 5) Above Rs. 3000.

Table 13.1

La-chen

Name of the valley	Size of Family	No. of families	Polyandrous or Polygamous	Source of Income	Monthly Income	No. of income earning families	Very poor	Poor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
La-chen	2-5 family members	63 families	1 Polygamous family	Agr., livestock rearing, other occupation	(I) Below Rs. 500/-	11 (one family alone keeps yaks only)	11	-
			4 polyandrous and 2 polygamous families	Agr., livestock, other occupation	(ii) Rs. 500- Rs. 1000	39 (8 families only have dept sheep and yaks along with goats and cattle).	-	39
			2 polygamous families	Agr., livestock, other occupation	(III) Above Rs. 1000- less than Rs. 2000	7 (4 families only have kept sheep and yaks along with goats and cattle)	-	-

Table 13.1 (Contd..)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			1 Poly androus family		(IV) Rs. 2000- Rs. 3000	6 (one of the families has kept sheep and yaks only)	-	-
					(IV) Above Rs. 3000	-	-	-
	<u>Larger</u> <u>Size</u> 5-10 members and above	37 families	1 Polyandrous family	Agr., livestock only	(I) Below Rs. 500	3 (Name of the families keeps yaks and sheep)	3	-
			4 Polyandrous and 1 Polygamous	Agr., livestock other occupation	(II) Rs. 500- Rs. 1000	25 families ten families have kept sheep and yaks	-	25

Contd.

Table 13.1 (Contd..)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			1 Polyandrous family	Agr., livestock other occupation Rs. 1000- Rs. 2000	(III) Above Rs. 1000- less than Rs. 2000	2 (none of the families has kept sheep and yaks)	-	-
			Nil	Agr., livestock, other occupation	(IV) Rs. 2000- Rs. 3000	5 (one family has kept sheep and yaks)	-	-
			Nil	Other occupations only	(V) Above Rs. 3000	2 (no sheep and yaks)	-	-
Total	2	100	11 Polyandrous and 6 Polygamous families	Below Rs. 500  Rs. 500- Rs. 1000			14	-  64

Table 13.2

## La-chung

Name of the valley	Size of Family	No. of families	Polyandrous or Polygamous	Source of Income	Monthly Income	No. of income earning families	Very poor	Poor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
La-chung	2-5 family members i.e. (small size)	44 families	Nil	Agr., livestock, apple orchards, other occupation	(i) Below Rs. 500	2	2	-
			Nil	-do-	(II) Rs. 500- Rs. 1000	33 (2 families have kept yaks only)	-	33
			Nil	-do-	(III) Above Rs. 1000- less than Rs. 2000	8 (only one family has kept yaks)	Nil	Nil
			Nil	-do-	(IV) Rs. 2000- Rs. 3000	1	Nil	Nil

Contd..

Table 13.2 (Contd..)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			Nil	-do-	(V) Above Rs. 3000	Nil	Nil	Nil
	<u>Larger</u> <u>Size</u> <u>5-10</u> members and above	56 families	7 Polyandrous families	Agr., Apple Orchard, livestock, other occupation	(I) Below Rs. 500	2	2	Nil
			4 Polyandrous families	Agr., livestock, other occupation	(II) Rs. 500- Rs. 1000	45 (only six families have kept yaks)	Nil	45
			3 Polyandrous families	-do-	(III) Above Rs. 1000- less than Rs. 2000	8 (only one family has kept yaks)	Nil	Nil

Contd..

Table 13.2 (Contd..)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			1 Polyandrous family	Agr., livestock, Apple orchard, other occupation	(IV) Rs. 2000- Rs. 3000	1	Nil	Nil
			Nil		(V) Above Rs. 3000	Nil	Nil	Nil
La-chung Total:	2	100	Nil Polygamous 15 Polyandrous		Below Rs. 500 Rs. 500- Rs. 1000	- -	4 -	- 78

In La-chen, out of the hundred families, the largest number of families belong to the income bracket of Rs. 500 - Rs. 1000 in both the size groups of 2-5 and 5-10 and above, the number of families being 39 and 25 respectively.

In the income bracket of below Rs. 500/-, the number of families which is 11 belong to the smaller size group of 2-5, whereas in the larger group of 5-10 and above, the number of families is 3 only.

In the third income bracket of Rs. 1000- less than Rs. 2000, 7 families in the size group of 2-5 and 2 in the larger group are found. In the income bracket of Rs. 2000 - Rs. 3000, 5 families in the larger size of family are registered.

The smaller family size of 2-5 members does have not a single family earning income above Rs. 3000, whereas in the larger size of family, two families belong to this income bracket of above Rs. 3000.

In our survey, we have taken family income, not per capita income as the basis for differentiating the very poor families from poor families and these two families from the rest of families belonging to higher income brackets. The family earning monthly income below Rs. 500 is regard as the very poor family and those earning Rs. 500-Rs.1000 as poor families. The total number of very poor families in La-chen is 14 and in La-chung 2 only. Similarly the total number of poor families in La-chen and La-chung is 64 and 78 respectively.



So far as their sources of income are taken into consideration, they are diverse in nature. Besides farming and livestock rearing being the primary sources of income, some of them work as labourers, and some in government departments. A few of them are contractors. Apple orchards are also another source of income for some families.

Under livestock rearing in La-chen valley, a number of animals such as cattle, goats, sheep and yaks etc. may be mentioned. But it is to be noted that all the families do not raise all these animals. Some families keep cattle only, or cattle along with a few goats, or cattle is kept with sheep and yaks, or sheep and yaks only. The families engaged in economic activities other than farming hardly keep any cattle. From the above tables it is found that only 25 families have kept sheep and yaks, either along with cattle and goats, or without them. For instance, one family in the income bracket of Rs. 2000-3000 of the smaller family size of 2-5, and two families in the same income bracket but in the larger family size of 5-10 and another two families in the same larger family size, but in the income bracket of above Rs. 1000 - less than Rs. 2000 have been found to keep sheep and yaks only.

Likewise four families in the income bracket of above Rs. 1000 - less than Rs. 2000 in the smaller family size and eight families in the same family size but belonging to the income bracket Rs. 500 - Rs. 1000 have been found keeping sheep and yaks along with cattle and goats. In the income bracket of below

Rs. 500 only one family has kept yaks.

Polyandrous families altogether 11, 4 in the income bracket of Rs. 500-Rs.1000, 1 in the income bracket of Rs. 2000 - Rs. 3000; both belonging to the smaller family size, and in the larger family size 1 family in the income bracket of below Rs. 500 and 4 in the income level of Rs. 500 - Rs. 1000 and another 1 family in the income bracket of above Rs. 1000 - less than Rs. 2000 have been found.

In La-chen and La-chung valleys of North Sikkim, polyandry still exists, though its percentage has plummeted at the present moment as it is evident from the above tables.

Apparently polyandry is social adaptation of the people of La-chen and La-chung to save their property of livestock and limited arable land from fragmentation. It is a fact that monasteries and polyandry have helped to transmit household and landed property undivided in the two valleys.

It has been found that families earning more than Rs. 3000 per month are not polyandrous in nature. Obviously, the families are modernised and so given up the practice of polyandry. As for the polygamous families in the smaller family size, one in the income bracket of below Rs. 500, and another two in the income level of above Rs. 1000 - less than Rs. 2000 have been found. In the larger family size, only one polygamous family has been found in the income bracket of Rs. 500 - Rs. 1000.

Regarding migrations of the people, all families at present do not migrate with the changes in seasons as it used to be the practice in ancient days. People, keeping themselves abreast of the changing time, are now engaged in various economic activities other than mixed farming. Only those families have, therefore, migratory life style, who depend entirely for their livelihood on farming and livestock rearing. Even in livestock rearing, it may be mentioned that the possession of a few heads of cattle does not make the families adopt a migratory life style. It is sheep and yaks that require huge expanse of pasturage as well as cooler regions in summer. People keeping sheep and yaks only, therefore, migrate towards uplands in summer and lower regions with the onset of winter and snowfall.

In the valley of La-chung, the people have more or less the same life-style as that of La-chen valley. Regarding the sources of income the only difference between these two valleys is that apple-orchards play a more important role for the La-chung tribals than those of La-chen.

As in the valley of La-chen, the number of polyandrous families in the valley of La-chung is very few at present. This is due to the spread of education and economic factors influencing their life style.

In livestock rearing, only 9 families in La-chung have been found to keep sheep and yaks along with either cattle only, or with cattle and goats.

The number of yak herders and sheep breeders has sharply declined in both the valleys due to vast tracts of upland pastures being occupied by the Indian army as well as the enforcement of strict vigilance by the Forest Department on the forest lands which are now not available for grazing. Education and dissemination of new ideas have also influenced the life style of the tribals of these two valleys making transhumance less attractive to them. A secure and comfortable life within the four walls of a permanent house with modern amenities, though much sought after by human beings everywhere, for the yak herders and sheep breeders of La-chen and La-chung, though very few in number, transhumance still forms an important activity. It is transhumance that has from the immemorial, rendered their life style unique from the rest of Sikkim.

It may be concluded from the economic survey that mixed farming, though providing a means of livelihood for the tribals of La-chen and La-chung, their life style will be criss crossed with hardships-physical as well as economical. Diversification of their source of income will definitely go a long way in lessening, if not eliminating their hardships and hastening the pace of development of these two valleys.