

Chapter -2
REVIEW OF
LITERATURE

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Review of Literature

There is an extensive body of literature categorised as ‘Farmers’ dealing with various aspects of agrarian question. It is impossible to survey all that literature. However, to study about farmers, certain agrarian aspects are required to be examined. Therefore, the first part of this chapter examines the writings on the basic aspects of agriculture such as definition of a farmer; systems of agriculture; and agrarian classes. Then, keeping in view the topic of the study, the second part of this chapter examines the writings on the socio-economic conditions of farmers and factors affecting farmers in India with special focus on the North-Eastern states particularly Manipur. And lastly, this chapter examines the role of government programmes in improving the socio-economic conditions of farmers.

2.1: Part-I: Agricultural System and Farmers

Wikipedia defines ‘Farmer’ as “a person engaged in agriculture, who raises living organisms for food or raw materials, generally including livestock husbandry and growing crops, such as produce and grain. A farmer might own the farmed land or might work as a labourer on land owned by others, but in advanced economies, a farmer is usually a farm owner, while employees of the farm are farm workers, farmhands, etc.”.

In the context of developing nations or other pre-industrial cultures, most farmers practice a meager subsistence agriculture—a simple organic farming system employing crop rotation, seed saving, slash and burn, or other techniques to maximise efficiency while meeting the needs of the household or community. In developed nations, however, a person using such techniques on small patches of land might be called a gardener and be considered a hobbyist. In the context of developed nations, a farmer (as a profession) is usually defined as someone with an ownership interest in crops or livestock, and who provides land or management in their production. Those who provide only labour are most often called farmhands. Alternatively, growers who manage farmland for an absentee landowner, sharing the harvest (or its profits) are known as share-croppers or share-farmers. Again in the context of agri-business, a farmer is defined broadly, and thus many individuals not necessarily engaged in full-

time farming can nonetheless legally qualify under agricultural policy for various subsidies, incentives, and tax deductions.

Thus, we have seen that the term “Farmer” can be defined from the view of developed and developing nation and from other perspectives. However, it is understood that in general terms a farmer is one who is engaged with agriculture, either directly or indirectly. For the purpose of this study, a farmer refers to a person who depends on agriculture as its prime means for support and subsistence. She/he may have other means of livelihood and work habits but not as a government employee/ pensioner.

Systems of Agriculture

There are different types of agriculture practised in different parts of the world. Farmer (1968) classifies the types or systems of agriculture as follows. (a) Shifting cultivation; (b) Simple sedentary cultivation with hand tools; (c) Simple plough cultivation; (d) Modern agriculture; and (e) Monoculture.

Shifting cultivation is the system under which temporary clearings of land, usually forest land, are done and cultivated for short periods. When a plot is cultivated for a couple of years, it is left fallow for some years so that it regains its natural vegetation and fertility. Meanwhile the cultivator shifts his agricultural operations to new plots. Because of such shifting from one plot to another by the cultivator, this form of agriculture is known as “shifting cultivation”. It is also known as “slash and burn” cultivation because the cultivator cuts and slashes the vegetation and burns it before sowing the seeds. It is also known as “swidden cultivation” because only simple hand tools are used in agricultural operations. In North-East India, it is known as “jhum cultivation”. This type of cultivation is practised by the Mao Naga farmers in Manipur and other hilly areas of North-East India. The main objective of shifting cultivation is to grow food crops, particularly rice and maize, though various types of vegetables are also grown.

Simple sedentary cultivation represents the fixation of shifting cultivation. This type of cultivation is the most ancient surviving practice in South East Asia. In many parts of Africa - South of the Sahara, ‘women’s gardens’ are to be found immediately around the village. Banana and other kinds of vegetables are grown by hand on a permanent basis in such gardens. This type of garden is usually found in the residential area, adjacent of the village and also found along with shifting

cultivation. The gardens are kept fertile by means of manure from goats, chickens, household waste and ashes. This type of cultivation is also widely practiced by the Mao Naga farmers in Manipur. The kinds of vegetables that they grow are mostly cabbage, squash, mustard leaves, beans, yam, tree tomarillo, etc.

Simple plough cultivation refers to the use of plough in cultivation, especially to improve the fertility of the soil. Over a vast area of the world, stretching from the Mediterranean and the Balkans to the Japanese archipelago and from central Asia to Ceylon, agricultural technology is still dominated by a simple traditional plow culture of cultivation. The vast populations of India, China, and the Middle East depend for their food supply on traditional methods of sedentary tillage using the types of wooden plow handed down from remote generations. This type of agriculture is found in most parts of India, including the plains of Assam.

Modern agriculture is dominated by the use of modern technology. There is a whole complex of development in this type of agriculture. There is an extensive use of machines and artificial fertilizers with assured irrigation systems which has turned the form of agriculture into almost industry. These new varieties have revolutionised traditional agriculture and led to Green Revolution. In India this type of agriculture is found in Punjab, Haryana and some parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Monoculture has an outstanding characteristic of modern agriculture with its high degree of specialization in a method of producing only one item of product. In such type of culture, the modern farmer chooses his crop not by applying a traditional technology and a limited range of crop choices to local natural conditions but by considering the demands of the market.

Agrarian Classes

And within agriculture itself, several scholars have identified the agrarian classes that have been emerged. We shall present here few of those significant views:

Lenin (1920) discussed the agrarian classes of the European countries as: (a) the agricultural proletariats as wage-labourers who obtain their livelihood by working for hire at capitalist agricultural enterprises; (b) the semi-proletarians or peasants who obtain their livelihood partly as wage-labourers, and partly by working their own or rented plots of land, which provide their families only with part of their means of subsistence; (c) the small peasantry, i.e., the small-scale tillers who, either as owners or tenants, hold small plots of land which enable them to satisfy the needs of their

families and their farms and do not hire outside labour; (d) middle peasants as those who, either as owners or tenants hold plots of land that are small but, are sufficient not only to provide a meager subsistence for the family and the basic minimum needed to maintain the farm, but also produce a certain surplus. Quite frequently, they resort to the employment of hired labour; (e) the big peasants who employ several hired labourers and they themselves perform on their farms; and; (f) the big landowners who systematically live on the rent of tenants. They themselves do not engage in manual labour and are descendants from feudal lords.

Mao Tse-tung has classified the rural classes of China as: (a) the land-lords who own land, do not engage in labour themselves or do so only to a very small extent, and live by collection of land rent; (b) the rich peasants who own land but some rich peasants own only part of their land and rent the remainder; (c) the middle peasants who own land and some of them own part of their land and rent the rest. Others rent all their land. Middle peasants derive their income wholly or mainly from their labours ; (d) the poor peasants some of whom own part of their land, while others own no land at all but only a few odd farm implements. As a rule poor peasants have to rent the land they work with an interest on loans and to hire themselves out to some extent; and (e) the workers who own no land or farm implements, though some of them do own a very small amount of land and very few farm implements. Workers make income through their labour power.

Dhanagare (1983) has identified agrarian classes in India as follows: (a) land-lords as who hold large tracts of land, usually absentee owners; (b) rich peasants as rich landowners and rich tenants, both with considerable holdings and employing labourers to carry on cultivation under their personal direct supervision. Rich tenants often sub-let land to others; (c) middle peasants as those who have sufficient holding of land to support a family, who cultivate land with family labour and usually employ only seasonal labour during harvest; (d) poor peasants as those land owners with holdings that are not sufficient to maintain a family, and therefore forced to rent others' land. They are poor tenants, having tenancy rights but less secure holdings with income often less than that earned by wage labour and tenants at-will or share-cropper; and (e) landless labourers as those who are without land and fully dependent on their wages.

This inventory of agrarian classes is said to be applicable to the whole of India. However, Christiana (2006) has also pointed out that it may be only partially

applicable to an understanding of the situation in the tribal belts of the country because of the tradition of communal ownership of land and an egalitarian ethos. There are further variations between the different tribal areas. Even in North-East India, the situation varies considerably between different areas in terms of socio-economic settings and economic change (Karna, 1990). For example, according to the custom of Vaiphai tribe in Manipur, the whole land is owned by the village chief and the chief assigns land according to the size of the family (Kshetri and Meinam, 1997). Ngaithe (1998) states that among the Zomi, one of the Kuki-Chin group of tribes, the tribal chief exercised control over the land in the past. The present situation is that the chiefs are increasingly becoming absentee landlords, and the actual cultivators are burdened by rents and are becoming victims of moneylenders. In case of an Angami Naga village called Jakhama in Nagaland as stated by Christina (2006) which also happens to be a neighbouring village of Mao, the only agrarian class found is that of cultivators. However, this class of cultivators is internally diversified because of inequalities of ownership of land in general, and terrace fields in particular. Therefore, on the basis of their dependence on cultivation and agricultural land, she has arranged the households of these cultivators into five groups: (a) cultivators depending on daily wages as those whose main source of income is daily wages; (b) marginal cultivators as those whose households can barely make both ends meet. They have terrace fields and produce 31 to 60 baskets or 460 to 900 Kg of paddy. Some own jhum fields and forest some hold low paid government jobs or are engaged in other low paying occupations; (c) self-sufficient cultivators as those households, which own terrace fields yielding between 61 and 90 baskets or 900 to 2700 Kg of paddy, may be considered as self-sufficient cultivators. They grow enough food grains in the terrace fields, and usually raise some cash crops like potatoes in the jhum fields. Even if their households are large, they are self-sufficient. They may also have some savings in the form of food grains; (d) prosperous cultivators as those households whose terrace fields yield between 91 baskets or 1365 Kg of paddy or above with plots of jhum fields and forest is considered a prosperous cultivator though the category of prosperous cultivators is not uniform, but includes inequalities; and (e) cultivators with low or marginal interest in cultivation as those households who have fields. But, their interest in cultivation is marginal because they have other sources of income or hold government jobs with fairly high pay. They retain ownership of some terrace fields because it confers on them membership in the

village and thus entitles them to all the rights and privileges of the members of the village.

We have seen from the above literature that in various parts of the world like European countries and other countries like China and India including the tribal region, there are various classes of agrarian structure - some are popularly recognised and some are not recognised though it is existent.

2.2: Part-II: Socio-Economic Conditions of Farmers in India

A. Farmers in India

In the present century, agriculture continues to be a fundamental instrument as engine of growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction (World Bank). India, being the second most populous nation in the world accounting for about 17.5% of world's population, the challenge before Indian agriculturists is to feed those 17.5% of the world's population supported by only on 2.4% of the world's geographical area. And with large number of the country's working population still dependent on agriculture, another critical challenge is the consequent low per capita income of the farmers, high possibility of debt trap and sudden distress due to exogenous shock. Besides, it is agriculture which plays a crucial role in sustaining all other forms of human and animal. But do we as a country have due consideration for them or recognise their labour, their immense care they take to grow agriculture and the risks involved in agriculture is a question put forward before the researchers. Patnaik (2001) has stated that to survive, India has to look at agriculture differently as it is the very backbone of our livelihood and ecological security systems as well as our national sovereignty.

Banerjee (1986) in his book "*Identification and Economic Analysis of Small Farmers*" holds a similar opinion that smallness of holding is one of the factors of low agricultural productivity and hence poverty of the rural masses. Banerjee further analyses that any development plan for the eradication of poverty must concentrate on increasing the productivity of the small farmers. While many people assume that smaller farms are significantly less efficient than larger farms, other studies have shown that small farmers are efficient in terms of productivity. They can do even better than big farmers if required inputs and production requisites are provided to the small farmers as in the case of large farmers. It is said that with this rationale, All

India Rural Credit Review Committee conceived the idea of the Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) for the upliftment of small farmers in every aspects.

SinghaRoy (2005) is his study on "*The life and Livelihood of Agricultural Labourers in Indian Villages at Wider Context and Grassroots Reflections*" states that being illiterate, devoid of the skill, knowledge and expertise, they respond only in terms of their physical worth they have with them. Vidyarthi and Rai (1976) and Hasnain (2001) added that since their entire physical existence is spent in procuring food, there is hardly any scope for rapid development in any other sphere.

Mishra and Bhattacharjee (2008) in their study on "*The People: Their Livelihoods and Critical Challenges*" puts forward that the percentage of small operational holdings of less than 2 hectares to total rural holdings increased from 59.6% in 1953-54 to 85.9 % in 2002-03. With the low surplus thus generated, there is little investment in land for improvement of agricultural productivity. This also denies the farmers' access to credit, leading to increased risk and vulnerability.

Raju and Chand (2008) in their NCAP Working Paper on "*Agricultural Insurance in India Problems and Prospects*" also stated that the condition of agriculture in India is subject to variety of risks arising from rainfall aberrations, temperature fluctuations, hailstorms, cyclones, floods, and climate change. These risks are exacerbated by price fluctuation, weak rural infrastructure, imperfect markets and lack of financial services including limited span and design of risk mitigation instruments such as credit and insurance. These factors not only endanger the farmers' livelihood and their socio-economic conditions but also undermine the viability of the agriculture sector and its potential to become a part of the solution to the problem of endemic poverty of the farmers and agricultural labour. It is not surprising then that areas with agriculture as a very basic subsistence activity, are also areas where a fair amount of migration in search of alternative livelihoods is observed.

It is said that even after more than 64 years of Independence, India still has the world's largest number of poor people in a single country. According to the latest Tendulkar Committee Report (2009) on poverty to the Planning Commission, 37.2% of the population is considered to be below the new poverty line of which rural national poverty headcount ration is 41.8%. It cannot be denied that poverty prevails both in rural as well as in urban areas of country. But we find that (68.84 %) of the Indian population lives in rural areas according to 2011 census. Thus, the poverty of India is the poverty of rural masses. A detailed enquiry reveals that the poverty of

rural masses is really the poverty of small farmers and the agricultural labourers (Madiman, 1950).

Thus, we find that the present scenario of agricultural sector in India has not been conducive for the farmers. As per the study of ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific of United Nations), persistent poverty and widening inequality is the result of decades of neglect of agriculture, despite it being the mainstay of the poor. Agriculture has not really been remunerative for quite some time. It has also been pointed out by the All-India Debt and Investment Survey (AIDIS) that in the formal banking system of India, financial exclusion of the economically backward classes is still a reality. Several studies have shown that the profit margins for farmers growing food grains are declining in many parts of the country. ILO (1996) stated that today, in the post-globalization era, one is not surprised if an employee (in the top rung) of a private concern (or a privatised organization in which the government has 51 % stake) gets ₹ 3 lakh/month or more as salary plus hefty perks, but the agricultural labourers' minimum wage rates fixed by the government lie in the range of ₹ 50-100 per day, well below the subsistence wages as per the ILO criteria. Once Gunnar Myrdale, the Nobel Laureate had stated that it is the agriculture sector which decides if the battle for long term economic development will be won.

Data generated by different rounds of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) shows that while structural changes in the economy have had an impact on the nature of employment generated in the various sectors, there is still high dependency on the agricultural sector for employment in the backward States. We also find from the Eleventh Five Year Plan that in nearly three decades, the structure of rural employment has not changed much. Furthermore, studies have also shown that employment opportunities and consequent income in the less developed States are primarily dependent on agriculture, especially for the unskilled labour category. Hence, the per capita income of persons engaged in agriculture would be lower in comparison to other sectors. These people constitute the poor and vulnerable sections among whom the phenomenon of migration for work is high. Thus, the unorganised or informal sector, comprising 92 per cent of India's working population, is characterised by poor socio-economic conditions, uncertainty of income and low social protection or security. Since the services sector is generally more inclined towards educated and skilled personnel, it is yet to provide any cushion against

endemic poverty and unemployment. They are also deprived of other opportunities such as the lack of a minimum standard of living in terms of food, clothes and shelter, facilities for elementary education and health facilities.

B. Farmers in the North-East India

Pradhan (2005) in his study on the “ *Socio-Economic Disparity in North Eastern Regions of India: Prospective Challenges and Opportunities* ” finds that about 88% of its total population lives in rural areas; agriculture employs nearly 68% of total workforce; and about 80 % of its population is dependent upon agriculture. Heavy dependence on agriculture implies that the secondary and tertiary sectors have not developed in the desired manner. Furthermore, agricultural system of NER is predominantly traditional in nature (Ramakrishnan, 1993; Agarwal, 1996; Ganguly, 1997). The findings of Pradhan also show that all in all the performance of agriculture is not at all satisfactory in NER. About 80 % of the farmers in the NER belong to the small and marginal category. With the increase in population, average size of holdings is gradually reducing over the years. As a result, mechanization of agriculture and adoption of modern farming practices is not feasible in these small plots size and subsequently, subsistence farming is predominant in NER and thus, there is no more commercial surplus.

Similar view has also been presented by Birthal, Jha, Joshi and Singh (2006) in their study on “ *Agricultural Diversification in the North Eastern Region of India: Implication for Growth and Equity* ” who stated that in North-Eastern Region, agriculture inspite of being the main source of livelihood, yet agriculture in the region is characterised as subsistence, low-input and technology laggard. Agriculture which determines the socio-economic conditions of the farmers in the North-East are also the key indicators for their overall growth and development. But unfortunately, subsistence seems to be the motto of the farmers in the North-East. This may also be indicated by the low per capita income of the NER which is much below the national average, i.e., around 70% of the all income in the NER is much below the national average. Though the urban poverty ratio in the region has fallen from 36.92% in 1973 to 7.4% in 1999-2000, the rural poverty ratios constituting farmers continue to be higher than the national average at 40.40%. The population below the poverty line in 2000-01 was 35.13% against the national average of 26.1%. The poverty ratios

provided by the Planning Commission, Government of India indicate that declining trend in rural poverty in NER was a slow process than that in rural India.

Reddy and Jayasree (2008) in their study on *“The Levels of Living in Northeast India in Reforms Era”* states that the effect of reforms on poverty reduction in rural areas of NER was found negligible and regressive in nature. The study also shows there is no significant improvement in the levels of living of the rural people in this part of the country in the nineties. This region also represents one of the highest rates of unemployment in the country with an unemployment rate close to 12% against a national average of 7.7% (Planning Commission, 2007). The NER particularly the farmers who generally inhabit in far off villages continues to suffer from disadvantages in terms of geographical isolation, transport bottlenecks, small market size and low investments where rail, road and air connectivity remains inadequate for them. The economic activities and social relationships of a farmer depend on agriculture. Thus, land is the most prized possession for a farmer yet cultivable land for agriculture remains detrimental in the North-East. According to the further findings of Reddy and Jayasree (2008), the available data indicate that about 22 per cent of land was irrigated in NER as against 35 per cent at all India level in 1991-1992. During the last ten years period, inspite of increase in population, no additional land was brought under irrigation in NER, while more than 10 per cent increase was seen at all India level. Application of fertilizers per hectare was about 30 kgs in NER as against 86 kgs at all India level in 2000-01. The share of electricity consumption for agricultural purpose in North-East states was negligible (only about 3 per cent as against 31 per cent at all India level). The flow of credit by scheduled commercial banks in NER is meager.

Another unfavorable condition of the farmers in the North-East as indicated by Reddy and Jayasree (2008) is that of high yielding varieties (HYV) programme which has been successful in the irrigated valleys has not touched other hill zones. The coverage of HYV area has been in increasing trend. But due to slow pace of infrastructure and non-availability (timely) of essential agriculture inputs, the programme is improperly managed. Hence, there is low usage of HYV seeds, fertilizers and other agricultural inputs. Fertilizer consumption in NER is also relatively very low in comparison to national average. This is mostly due to defective fertilizer distribution system, lack of supply, inadequate transport, storage and credit facilities, raising cost of fertilizers and the occurrence of primitive techniques of

production. Moreover, the green revolution, which involved seed technology, was not suitable in the hill areas, where horticulture development rather than crop production can usher in economic development. All in all, the performance of agriculture is not at all satisfactory. Besides, the uses of primitive techniques are also substantially responsible for the low performance of North-East Agriculture. Moreover, the use of modern inputs is simultaneously not feasible in the hill areas. Sometimes factors like lack of purchasing power, indifference, risk and uncertainty, ignorance, etc. also adversely affect the use of modern inputs. The desire to invest in agriculture is greatly hampered due to lack of opportunities.

Thus, the NER as a whole, with its predominantly tribal population of small-scale subsistence farmers continues to experience a higher incidence and severity of poverty. It is said that negligence of past development initiatives have often resulted in limited benefits. Positive change on a substantive scale could not be achieved for a complex set of reasons. One of the root causes has been the prescriptive approach that was followed which generally ignored the socio-cultural complexity of indigenous and their interrelations. The North-Eastern States thus are largely characterised by medium to low level of developments, which are reflected in low per capita income, poor economic base, limited industrial development which is more prevalent in the villages where the farmers reside. The States however are endowed with rich natural resources. Side by side the region is also endowed with rich cultural and heritage background.

C. Farmers in Manipur

According to the findings of Bareh (2001) in "*Encyclopedia of North East India*", about 70% of the area in the hill districts of Manipur is under forests and about 24% is non-agricultural. About 1% area is under miscellaneous tree crops-fruit trees and groves, and the rest about 5% is the cropped land, mostly under shifting and terrace cultivation. With less than 5% of area under some sort of farming, majority of the farming community have small and marginal land holdings: Marginal farmers (upto 1 hectare of land who constitute 40.91% of the holding own 18.9 % of the land; the small farmers (1-3 hectares of land) who constitute 55.1% of the holding own 68.0% of the land. The remaining 13.1% of the land is owned by medium and large farmers and constitute 4.08% of the total holdings. The pressure of population on the limited cultivable land has remained very high in the hills. The methods and implements used

in agriculture are of primitive types. The performance of agriculture in the state mainly depends on timely rainfall, weather conditions, natural drains, private canals and minor irrigation. Rice is the staple food and is grown in hill and plain areas and it accounts for about 98 % of the total food grain production of the State in 2006-07. For the sustenance, the tribal people dwelling in these hills grow variety of crops on favorable hill slopes surrounding their villages with predominance of rice and maize. Cabbage, potato, yam, peas, squash, mustard and rapeseed, ginger, chillies, banana, pineapple and oranges are widely grown in different parts of the hills in impressive quantities.

Apart from the severe difficulties that the farmers in the hilly areas of Manipur face, the overall support system of socio-economic and other development work remain unfavorable for them. Jasantakumar (2009), in his study on *“Economic Development and National Security: Special Focus on Manipur’s Chapter”* highlighted that the road density in Manipur is 0.32 km per sq.km against an All India Average (AIA) of 0.62 per sq. km with only 61.73% of the roads being surfaced. There is only 1.5 kms of railway line. The people in the state have neither accessible railways nor navigable waterways and the transport system is synonymous with road communication. The only major functional railhead linking Manipur with the rest of India is at Dimapur town of Nagaland state which is 215 km. away from Imphal. The existing facilities of transport and communication are not adequate which continued to be a major constraint in the development process of the state.

Singh (2010) in his book on *“Social Geography on Manipur -A Comparative Study of Tribal and Non-Tribal People”*, writes that even within Manipur there is apparent disparity in the level of income and consumption between the rich and the poor, between the urban elite and the rural poor, between the haves and have-nots and between the public living in the hills and in the valley or the tribals and the non-tribals. Here the poor and the have-nots are understood as mostly farmers from the hills who depend on agriculture for survival.

Biswas (2010) stressed that before the British arrived in India, the tribal groups were excluded groups because they were not a part of the greater traditional Hindu society. At best they may be termed as the parallel segment in a different domain. Reddy and Jayasree (2008) in their study on *“Levels of Living in North-East India in Reforms Era”* remarked that there was a feeling among the people from this region that the development process was neglected after Independence as it was

geographically alienated from the rest of India. They also found that effect of reforms on poverty reduction in rural areas of NER was found negligible and regressive in nature. Remaining backward and largely isolated, this section of people has not received the attention and focus it deserves. Burman (1993) also stated that the tribals not only live in geographical periphery of the country they also live in the periphery of the power structure.

General studies done on farmers in Manipur admit that farmers in Manipur experience marketing problem to dispose of their products at remunerative prices. They lack facilities to export their products or even store in cold storage to use in off season. Besides, agriculture in the state is mostly seasonal and subject to frequent instabilities and fluctuations in agricultural production and dependent on other states of the country for most of its essential items of consumer goods. Studies have shown that production of crops is far below the state's requirement. The High Yielding Varieties Programmes which are introduced in India since the mid sixties play a significant role in boosting agricultural production. However, the adoption of HYVs in the State has been found to be very slow particularly in the hill areas and also with regard to other crops except for paddy. Consequently, the socio-economic development of the farmers is hampered. Bhargava (2008) in her study entitled "*Agricultural Security: How to attain it*" suggests that agricultural security in our country should be considered functionally synonymous with food security, and with the security of our farmers and of the rural sector where they live and work.

Thus, we get a glimpse from the literature review above that in Manipur, the overall structure for growth and development remains poor especially in rural areas where farmers reside. Poverty is also a serious concern in Manipur. It has been reported that in the year 2009-10, with a population of 47.1% below poverty line, Manipur has emerged as a state in the North-East with a highest number of population living below poverty line. It is understood that poorest of poor are the farmers who have no skills to upgrade themselves in the changing situation.

2.3: Part-III: Role of Government Programmes

A. National Scenario

Providing sustainable livelihoods to the poor has been a major thrust area for development planners, policy makers and practitioners. A number of developmental

schemes and programmes have been launched and implemented by the union as well as the state governments through various agencies. These have been done to alleviate the appalling poverty levels keeping in consideration for the development and welfare of the tribal and other marginalised groups in the society. Efforts have also been made to increase the agricultural productivity and enhance the income and living standard of rural masses and other necessary services.

It has also been categorically stated by the directive of the Fourth Plan that in implementation of the programmes, the weakest are looked after and the benefits of development are made to flow by planned investment in all the underdeveloped regions among the more backward section of the community. We shall now review some significant literature on the role of such government programmes by a sequence of first examining some the writings at the all India level; and then examining those writings in North-East India and Manipur scenario.

Minz (2005) in his article entitled, "*Tribal Issues in India*" makes a penetrating statement of how the government shows great sympathy for the poor and backward tribals and spends millions of rupees each year for their welfare. But these amounts are not spent for projects properly. They are mostly eaten up by an army of workers in these departments, offices and projects. The late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had even remarked so after visiting tribal villages in Chattisgarh. The hundred rupee note starts its journey from Delhi to reach remote corners of India for the welfare of tribals. After travelling through State capitals and District and Development Block Centres, only about 10 paise reaches the tribal villages. From this one can gauge how much the government is concerned.

Singh (2009) in his effort to explore the economy of Tharu in the changing scenario examines various programmes that have been launched to improve the socio-economic conditions. (Programmes such as distribution of plough and bullocks/male buffalos, dunlop carts, power threshers, sheep units, poultry farming, piggery, loudspeakers and setting up of flour mills, handloom weaving/carpet making centers, training in tailoring and providing disabled, old age and widow pension scheme and IAY). He finds that some of the schemes were launched without considering the peculiar needs of the local people who had been depending on agriculture and forests since time immemorial. Hence while the beneficiaries find it hard to accept the objectives proposed to be attained, nobody is ready to accept the responsibility for the

failure. (Chaudhury 1993, 2004) further adds that such schemes are the basic features of development effort in a majority of the tribal settings all over India.

Sukai (2010) in his attempt to overview Tribal Development in India analyses that achievements of schemes/programmes of Scheduled Tribe are a matter of some satisfaction as various development plans, policies and programmes have brought forth a perceptible improvements in the socio-economic status of the Scheduled Tribe. He further stressed that a lot more needs to be done with concerted focus on the issues crucial to improve their status on par with the rest of the population.

B. North-East and Manipur Scenario

Bose, Nongbri and Kumar (1990) with regard to tribal development programmes in the North-East states that it is not that nothing has been done for them but that benefits meant for tribals get diverted to the pockets of exploiters and corrupt officials. Also very often such programmes remain in cold storage for long periods merely because staff members are reluctant to go into the rural areas to implement them.

Pradhan (2005) make a comprehensive indepth of study on the Socio-Economic Disparity in North-Eastern India and finds that the region has not been lacking in policy attention and programmes. A lot of development initiatives have been developed in North-Eastern Region: North-Eastern Council (NEC); Department of North-Eastern Region (DONER); Hill Area Development Programme (HADP); and Border Area Development Programme (BADP). Furthermore, in 1997, government announced new industrial policy for NER which encompassed a comprehensive incentive package for stimulating industrial development, and creation of a non-lapsable Central Resources Pool (1998-99) for ensuring speedy development of infrastructure in NER. There is also Prime Minister's Special Package of over ₹ 10000 crore for the socio-economic development of NER.

“Economic Survey of Manipur, (2008-09)” states that in Manipur, improvement in the quality of life of the socially and economically weaker sections of the society is one of the basic objectives of development planning. As far as rural development is concerned, the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Manipur is the nodal agency to ensure implementation of various programmes for accelerating the pace of development in rural areas of the State through District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs)/Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). A number of

programmes viz. NREGS, SGSY, JGSY, EAS, IAY, PMGY, PMGSY, etc. have been under implementation in the State to ensure minimum wage to rural workers and enable them to acquire assets and income through self-employment ventures. In this context, it would be appropriate to evaluate various developmental schemes and programmes launched in the State to uplift the standard of living of the rural population of Manipur.

Another problem that ails the North-Eastern society which Kikhi (2009), identifies is the flow of money in the form of special economic packages enmarked for the region by successive central governments. She believes that when abundant money is injected into the economy without due accountability it creates a regime of corruption.

Catherine (2009) in her study on *“Tribal Development in India With Special Reference to Manipur – Trajectory and Literature”* examines various literatures on the schemes and programmes of government in Manipur afterwhich she elucidates that despite of all tremendous efforts and massive input the results have fallen short of expectation. Further, her findings show that in Manipur the implementation of economic development programmes is not evenly carried out throughout the state which has led to the disparity between different regions and sections of the society. Therefore she concludes that it is difficult to think of a balanced development of the state without improving the lot of tribal people living in the hill districts.

Lotha (2010) in his study on the *“Role of Village Development Boards in Regenerating Rural Society of Nagaland: A Critical Observation”* finds that in Nagaland there is no dearth of funds for development but there is a lack of interest in development that neither the government officials nor the political parties are truly committed to the task of development and even the people have no real interest in self development. His study further reveals that the Naga villagers who lack the spirit of professionalism and awareness are neither properly informed about the development schemes and participating procedures in development administration nor the innocent villagers are nicely cooperated by the officials concerned. It has also been found that a few conscious, alert and developed villagers, who have close link with the District authorities, obtain undue benefits of the development schemes and programmes.

At this juncture, it may be worthwhile to consider the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt who said that, “the test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those

who have too little”. To conclude, the purpose of various development programmes may best be understood in the words of our first prime-minister J.N. Nehru who said that “we should judge the results not by statistics or the amount of money spent but by the quality of human character that is evolved”

Mao (1998) one of the most eminent and senior most scholars from Mao Naga tribe makes a comprehensive study on “*The Status of Women in Mao Society*” and thereby concludes with suggestion for economic upliftment. He writes “the first and foremost remedy that I wish to suggest is the economic upliftment. The Mao society being free from caste system and evils like dowry, can improve conditions with economic improvement. Poverty lies at the root of almost all evils. With necessary economic changes and employment opportunities, the Mao society will prove to be more egalitarian”. A change in economic structure could bring change in many aspects of social structure (Sharma, 2005).

From the above discussion, it is understood that in the development planning process, uniform approaches to uplift all the backward societies of the country without the knowledge and consideration of the local and unique needs of the particular region did not make the programme successful because each tribe/region has its own unique way of life. Hence, the unique nature of every region needs to be considered. Attempts are needed to analyze each region/tribe at the micro level, to address the development issues unique to them considering the solidarity of the people, their communal feelings, unity, result oriented concern, and involvement of local people’s participation which are all important dimension of Social Work intervention.

Thus, from the above review of literature, it is found that no study has been carried out so far on the socio-economic conditions of Mao Naga farmers. In fact, no study has also been conducted to examine the role of government programmes in improving the conditions of Mao farmers. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to assess the socio-economic conditions of the Mao Naga farmers; to identify and analyze factors affecting the socio-economic condition of Mao Naga Farmers; and examine the role of Government Programmes in improving their socio-economic conditions. The present study is also an attempt to find out the possibilities of social work intervention to improve the socio-economic conditions of Mao Naga farmers. Therefore, it is pertinent to undertake the present study in the proposed area.

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