

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF POPULATION IN
MYLLIEM BLOCK, EAST KHASI HILLS,
MEGHALAYA

A REPORT OF THE PROJECT SPONSORED

BY

UGC-NNFPA, INDIA

Dr. S.K. MISHRA
Reader
Department of Economics
North-Eastern Hill University
SHILLONG



PREFACE

The volume in hand is the report of the survey carried out in a few villages of Myllem Community Development Block, the East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, during 1987-1988. This survey was carried out under a project on preparation of the socio-economic profile of population in Myllem Block. This project formed a part of a larger project sponsored by the UGC-NNFPA, Government of India to the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya.

First of all, I acknowledge my gratitude to Dr. M. C. Pandey, Head of the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, NEHU, Shillong, for providing me a chance to come closer to the area and the people while carrying out the survey. Experiences while surveying and analysing information have certainly enriched my knowledge. Then, I am grateful to the people who took pains to fill in the questionnaires and still greeted me and my investigator, Mr. William J. Lyngskor, with a smile.


I am especially thankful to Mr. W.J. Lyngskor for his readiness to work as Investigator in this project. He could hardly be compensated commensurately with the pains and exertion that he had to undergo for getting the questionnaires filled in. I prepared the questionnaire (in English) with his consultation and he translated it in Khasi with a great aptitude. When questionnaires were filled in, the English translation also was

(ii)

made by Mr. Lyngskor. His cooperation could save much financial resources of the project which could have otherwise been spent on translation.

In analysing the data obtained from the survey I have been greatly helped by Dr. N. P. Goel, Department of Geography, NEHU, Shillong, who allowed me to use his Departmental Computer. He was helpful in feeding data also. I acknowledge his help and cooperation with a feeling of gratitude.

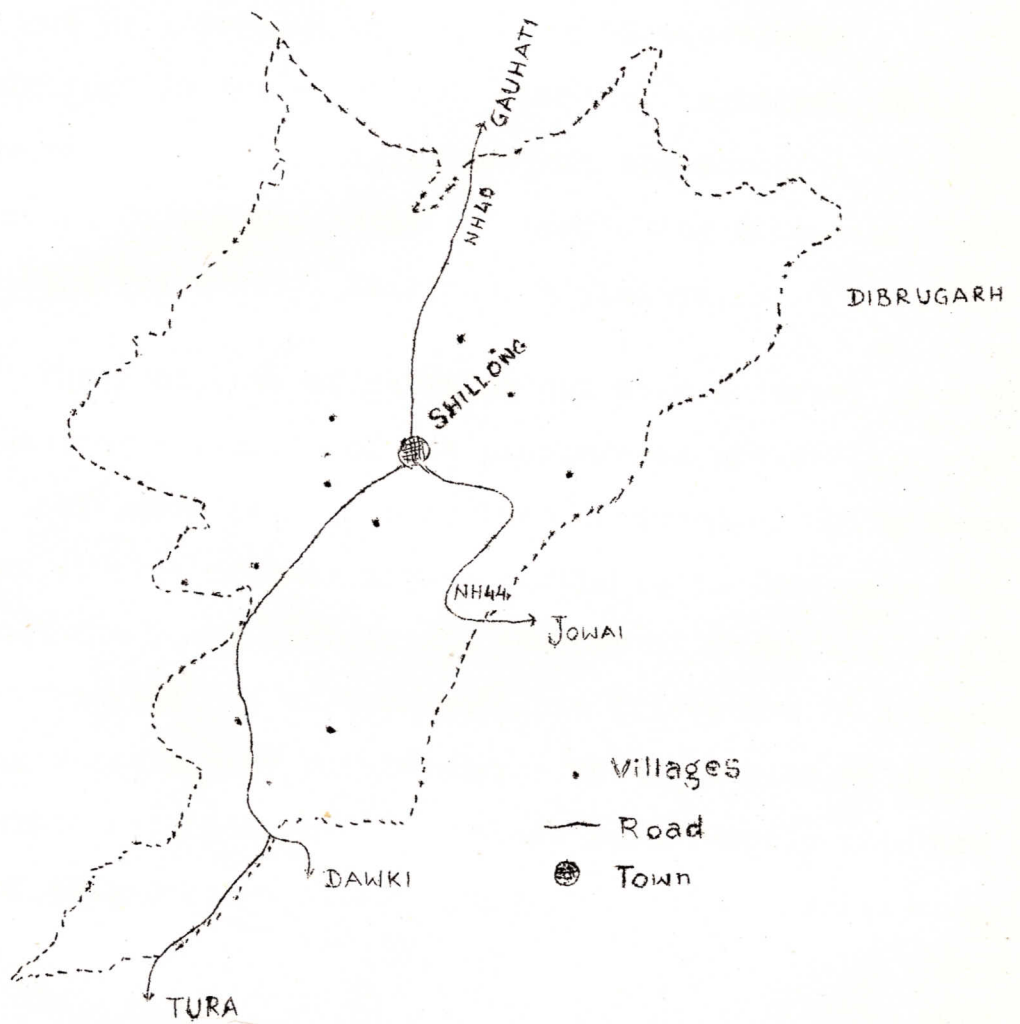
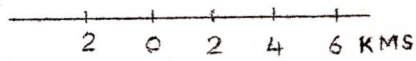
Dr. N. Shrivastav of the Department of Economics, NEHU, Shillong, cursorily read the manuscript and encouraged me by expressing his good opinion about it. Amaresh and Bishwambhar, the two young colleagues of mine who love me very much, have encouraged me to complete this work nicely. Prof. K. Bez has always shown an encouraging gesture and my M.A./M.Phil/Ph.D. students did really bear with me for (at least partly) side-tracking their interest. I am thankful to them.


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(S. K. MISHRA)
Department of Economics
North-Eastern Hill University
Shillong

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EAST KHASI HILLS, MEGHALAYA

MYLLIEM C. D. BLOCK



CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Project and the Survey

The volume in hand is the report of the survey carried out in a few villages of Myllem Block, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, during December 1987 - March 1988. This survey was carried out as a project to prepare a "Socio-economic Profile of Population" in the said C.D. Block of Meghalaya. This project formed a part of a bigger project sponsored by the UGC-NNFPA to the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya.

The prospects of carrying out such a survey to prepare a socio-economic profile of the people/area are certainly great and the usefulness of such a profile is immense. While there are but a few studies of this nature available to those who want to know about the local society and economy of Meghalaya, a study of this type will add to the available literature of interest. From such a study many points emerge that may give us direction to formulate policies, make plans and subsequently help the people of this area to attain a higher level of social and economic well-being.

2. Some Methodological Considerations

In this survey (and report), however, we have not been able to portray all the significant aspects of the society and the economy of the area and the people that we have studied;

nor have we been able to analyse deep-seated reasons and causes and inter-correlations among them, the resultant of which forces and interactions are the indicators that make such a profile. The reasons behind the said limitation of this survey and report therefore, are numerous. The first of them is the fact that from the very beginning this survey was meant for providing an outline or rather a cursory view of the socio-economic profile of the area/people that we have studied. A meagre amount of Rs. 2,500 was allocated to this project which could finance only one investigator, part time and that also for only a small period of time. Such a limitation restricted the scope of the study and therefore we could plan for distributing questionnaires to some selected households of a few villages. In obtaining the filled in questionnaires as well we could obtain only a partial success. That was a time when the area under study had not reached a political equilibrium and we found that the circulation of the questionnaires often aroused a feeling among the people that had some political expectations. When our investigator made it clear to the people that these questionnaires are to be filled in for carrying out a research and this project does not form a programme to provide any material benefit to the people being surveyed — either on behalf of the State Government or that of the Centre we cannot ensure that they will be given some material benefit — the people often discredited the usefulness of our effort to obtain data. The respondents, in many cases, reacted rather coldly. As a result, many of the

questionnaires could not be filled in. In course of the survey we had to change the choice of villages. Some villages originally planned to be surveyed had to be discarded and new one selected. Finally, we could obtain 106 questionnaires from eight villages. Out of these questionnaires thirteen were found to be utterly poor in providing any information and hence we proceeded with 93 questionnaires.

In view of the limitations noted above, we will not indulge in the methodological issues that may be pertinent enough for any scientific study. This is one of the reasons that has refrained us from providing tables and information at the village level. We have pooled the data obtained from all the eight villages and processed the data to draw some inferences at the gross level. We must note that from the very beginning our purpose was not to provide information at village level. We planned to obtain the socio-economic profile at the Block level. To this end, pooling of villages does not detract us from the maintained objectives.

"To what extent and with what degree of bias does this study reveal the parametric profile of the Block" is a question that might be raised. To answer this question we will take only a semi-scientific stand. We will argue that in the cases while we have some idea about the parameters, we have obtained estimates very close to them, though we will not indulge in expressing them in terms of probability or level of significance.

To give some examples, our findings about the average family size, nuclearity of the household, religious faith of the household, dependency ratio, dependency on the sources of livelihood, and some socio-institutional aspects are not at much variance with the parametric magnitudes that have been obtained through Census or other surveys. Further, many types of information that we have gathered here in this survey cannot be compared at all in view of the fact that they have not been recorded or reported elsewhere.

Secondly, while analysing the data we have observed the asymptotic properties in the estimates. The most of the estimates started stabilising around some fixed magnitudes after 55 - 60 questionnaires were included. Such a finding stirred up our analytical sense. As a result, from the pool of 93 we started drawing random samples of gradually increasing sizes and estimating the parameters at each iteration. We observed the asymptotic properties becoming pronounced whenever the sample size grew larger than 55 (or sometimes sixty). From this we conclude that even if we could collect some more samples (by filling in some more questionnaires), our findings could hardly change to any significant degree.

Nevertheless, a methodological question still remains. Suppose, the Block has n types of villages (types defined in terms of parameters). Our eight villages might have been drawn from them which may represent only m (m less than n) types.

Thus n-m types are not represented. Hence the estimates based on the samples do not represent the Block level parameters. We will not make any attempt to defend our study. However, we will point out that the eight villages selected by us are quite varied in characteristics. Some are close to the township while others are far. Some are at the roadside while others are not. Some are smaller in size and others are larger. Such variations may increase the representativeness of these villages. Nevertheless, the methodological question raised above remains grossly unanswered.

3. The Study Area and the Sample Villages

Myllem Community Development Block is economically and politically central in the East Khasi Hills of the State of Meghalaya. The state capital, Shillong, is centrally located in this Block. Though administratively, Shillong Municipality is different from this Block, but functionally it may not be considered so (socio-economically and politically speaking). In fact, many areas of this Block form the Greater Shillong (the Shillong urban agglomeration).

Myllem Block is inhabited by over 55 thousand rural people (in rural areas of the Block) and over 30 thousand urban people (in the urban areas forming Greater Shillong). In the rural part of the Block, literacy is about 40 per cent; male literacy is relatively more than the female literacy (44:37).

Dependency ratio is about 0.59 which among the males is substantially lower (.49) than in females (0.70). According to occupation, the distribution of workers is given in the table I.3.1.

Table I.3.1
Occupationwise Distribution of Workers
in Myllem Block (1981 Census)

Occupation	Sex	Culti- vators	Agril. Labou- rers	Forestry, mining, animal husb. service, commerce etc.	Industry & process- ing	Total
Workers in 1000	Male	5.6	2.7	6.0	0.14	14.4
	Female	5.1	1.5	1.2	0.03	7.8
	Total	10.7	4.1	7.2	0.16	22.2

Unlike many other C.D. Blocks in the East Khasi Hills, Myllem has threefold advantages to count on. The first is its location very close to the State Capital which has a fairly long cultural and economic history, the second is the relatively less rugged topography and thirdly it gets several spillover benefits from the township of Shillong which is introducing very fast social and economic changes in the rural society of the Block.

To portray an outline of the socio-economic features of this Block we could draw much from the Census reports. However, partly because the census year (1981) had gone far back in the past (in view of the fast changes taking place in the economic

and social profile of the people in the recent years), and partly because we wanted to seek for some information that are not covered in censuses, we decided to draw upon the primary data, collected through sample survey. We decided to select a few villages and in these villages a few households selected rather randomly. (In our case randomness is judged on subjective grounds rather than in the standard statistical manner. The main reasons for such an approach were the pressing constraints of human and financial type).

Initially we started with the following villages:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Nongkseh | 7. Lawsotun |
| 2. Umpling | 8. Umlyngka |
| 3. Myllem | 9. Nongrim |
| 4. Fifth Mile | 10. Mawklot |
| 5. Fourth Mile | 11. Mawlong |
| 6. Umshing | 12. Mawtawar |
| | 13. Twelfth Mile. |

We planned to obtain data from any eight of these villages. Finally, we could obtain data from the following of the villages: (1) Nongkseh, (2) Umpling, (3) Umlyngka, (4) Umshing, (5) Fifth Mile, (6) Nongrim, and (7) Myllem. One village was freshly selected, namely (8) Nongrah.

To the best of our effort to hold on to the criteria of selecting these villages we, nevertheless, do not claim that the selection has been unbiased. However, they fairly represent the villages scattered around the township of Shillong — some very near, some farther; some smaller, some larger, some closer to the roadside and others distant. We thus could control biases as much as they may arise due to population size, or to distances of the villages from the township or their location at distance from the roadside.

4. Organisation of the Report

Proceeding this introductory chapter, the report has been organised into four chapters:

Chapter II : Some Socio-economic Characteristics at the family level.

Chapter III : The Economy of the Households.

Chapter IV : Attitudes, Institutions and Social Participation.

Chapter V : Conclusion.

5. Further Limitations

It would be worth recording what we hold about the report to be its limitations that could be supplemented. First of all, the variety of variables (social and economic) that we have studied mostly in individuality could be studied for the intercorrelations among them. For example, we see that a good

number of respondents have reported to observe some social/religious restrictions/taboo etc. Does the observance of such restrictions/taboo have some relationship with the level of education or economic status (may be, measured in terms of income)? Does the degree of participation in village level political institutions or social work vary with the level of education or income? Has the educational attainment of the head of the household any impact on the educational attainment of the whole household? Such many questions have not been addressed to in this study. Investment behaviour of the households has not been studied.

A deep study of the opinions on politics could be carried out. Such a study may shed light on the political institutions, beliefs and attitudes.

Many other limitations may go unnoticed at this point. Readers may find some of them just while they go through the report or after some reflection on the findings of the report. All these may make a basis for the further researches.

CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to portray a sketch of the socio-economic condition of the society in the Myllem Block, Meghalaya. The scope of this study has been very limited on account of a meagre fund available to conduct this study. Within the limitations of the fund we could collect data from only a few villages employing one part time investigator. The response to the questionnaires distributed among the households in the village has not been much encouraging. Many questionnaires could not be filled in. Out of 106 questionnaires (filled in) that we obtained thirteen are giving not much information and hence were rejected. We analysed ninety three questionnaires that remained.

Insufficiency of the number of filled in questionnaires prohibit any analysis and hence drawing of any conclusion at the village level. Hence we have considered them together. Statistical problems due to such pooling are well-taken. Within these limitations, however, we dare to draw some conclusions at the macro or block level.

In analysing these questionnaires we have divided their content in three major heads: information at the familial level of the respondents, mainly related to characteristics of the

household (Chapter II), economic characteristics (Chapter III) and social and political beliefs, opinions, institutions etc. (Chapter IV).

To reiterate, in Chapter II our main findings are:

- (i) The average size of the households is seven members.
- (ii) Fifty four percent of the households are of nuclear structure.
- (iii) The majority of the households belong to the Christian religion.
- (iv) Though the society is matrilineal, it is not matriarchial: about 80 percent households report that the head of the family is a male member.
- (v) Literacy of the head of the household is rather poor; 58 percent households have their heads illiterate.
- (vi) About 62 percent of the households have not achieved education level beyond matriculation.
- (vii) About 40 percent households have no illiterate member.

In Chapter III, our main findings are:

- (i) Average dependency ratio is one dependent to one earning member.
- (ii) Larger families have higher dependency ratio.
- (iii) Most of the households draw their livelihood from service, agriculture or animal husbandry or a mix of them.

- (iv) Over seventy five percent of the households have annual income less than 50 thousand.
- (v) Fifty six percent of earning members in the family are males.
- (vi) Males outnumber females in service/daily wages while the opposite is the case with commerce and business. In agriculture, however, they are equally participating.
- (vii) Most of the families live in four roomed houses.
- (viii) Consumption pattern varies with income but in general the elasticity is small in magnitude.

In Chapter IV, our main findings are:

- (i) A good percentage of households take part in social service and sports. They take part in village level administration.
- (ii) Exposure to the mass-media is very poor.
- (iii) A good percentage of households observe some social restrictions or taboos, very varied in nature.
- (iv) They perceive some social, economic and political problems and believe that they can be solved by the efforts made at a collective level. They exhibit no much faith in the prevailing political ways to solve the problems.

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