

LHOPS

(DOYA)

OF BHUTAN

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT



B. DEBEN SHARMA

In this book a maiden attempt is made to give a first hand description on the life and culture of Lhops (Doya), one of the least known indigenous communities in Bhutan. The book is an outcome of an intensive field work among the people and personal experience of the author. The author worked among the people as a primary school teacher for four years between 1990 and 1994.

The book contains an ethnographic account of the Lhops (also popularly known as Doyas) social organization, kin terms and relations, Doya philosophy of life and death, traditional economy and livelihood patterns and impact of modern economy and other cultures.

Rs. 750

B. Deben Sharma (b. 1964) did his M Sc Anthropology from Delhi University and Ph D from Centre for Himalayan Studies of North Bengal University.

Deben Sharma has worked in several NGO network in the North eastern region, national and international levels on issues of peace and development. He is presently actively involved in Peacebuilding programming including peace and conflict studies at the regional and national levels.

ISBN 81-8370-006-3

Lhops (Doya) of Bhutan

An Ethnographic Account

B. DEBEN SHARMA

AKANSHA PUBLISHING HOUSE
NEW DELHI

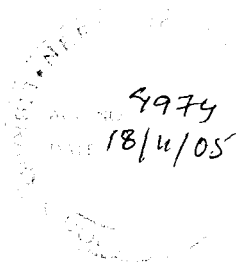
AKANSHA PUBLISHING HOUSE

R 37-B, Vani Vihar, Uttam Nagar
New Delhi-110059
Email: ektabooks@yahoo.com

305.891417
SHA

Showroom

4649/21B, Ansari Road
Darya Ganj
New Delhi - 110 002
Ph.: 23269193 / 9811582579



Lhops (Doya) of Bhutan: An Ethnographic Account

© Author

First Edition 2005

ISBN 81-8370-006-3



004974

All rights reserved. Including the right to translate or to reproduce this book or parts thereof except for brief quotations in critical reviews.

[The responsibility for the facts stated, conclusions reached etc. is entirely that of the Author. The publisher is not responsible for them, whatsoever.]

PRINTED IN INDIA

Published by M.P. Misra for Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi and
Printed at Mehra Offset Press, Delhi.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>List of Tables</i>	xv
<i>List of Sketches</i>	xvii
<i>List of Genealogical charts</i>	xviii
<i>List of Maps</i>	xviii
<i>List of Plates</i>	xix
Introduction	1-26
The Land and People of Bhutan	1
Background to the study	8
Objectives of the Study	16
Geographical location of the Study Area	17
Approach, Method and Techniques	18
Plan of Presentation	23
1. Physical and Social Setting	27-67
Location and Geographical Features of Doya Habitat	27
Physical Features and Demographic situation	34
Doya Language	40
Houses	40
Clothing	50
Occupation and Daily Activities	51
Food and Drinking Habits	53
Health and Sanitation	54
Recreational Activities	56
Modern Education and Occupational Change	59
Summary	62

2. Social Organisation	68-111
<i>Riihs</i> : Their Origins and Deities	69
<i>Ewui</i> : Organisation of Residential Territories	74
<i>Makim</i> : An Abode of Matrilineage and Matrilocality	76
Rules relating to Conjugal Relations	82
<i>Makim</i> and its Developmental Cycle	90
Case Studies	94
Summary	103
3. Kin Terms and Relations	112-147
Ego's Social Matrix	113
Ego's Residential and Lineal Group	114
Doya System: A Typological Problem	123
Doya System of Kin Terms and Relation	125
Comparison with Other Systems	136
Summary	141
4. Doya Response to Questions of Life and Death	148-164
Birth of Child	150
Parenthood	153
Death and Funeral Rites	154
Summary	162
5. Economy and Livelihood Pattern	165-202
Traditional Subsistent Economy	166
Livelihood Situation	170
Impacts on Doya Economy and Livelihood Pattern	175
Summary	184
<i>Annexures</i>	
Household data of Lotok	188
Household data of Lotukuchu A&B	190
Household data of Sanglung	195
Household data of Satakha	198
Household data of Lapcheygoan (Rai village)	200

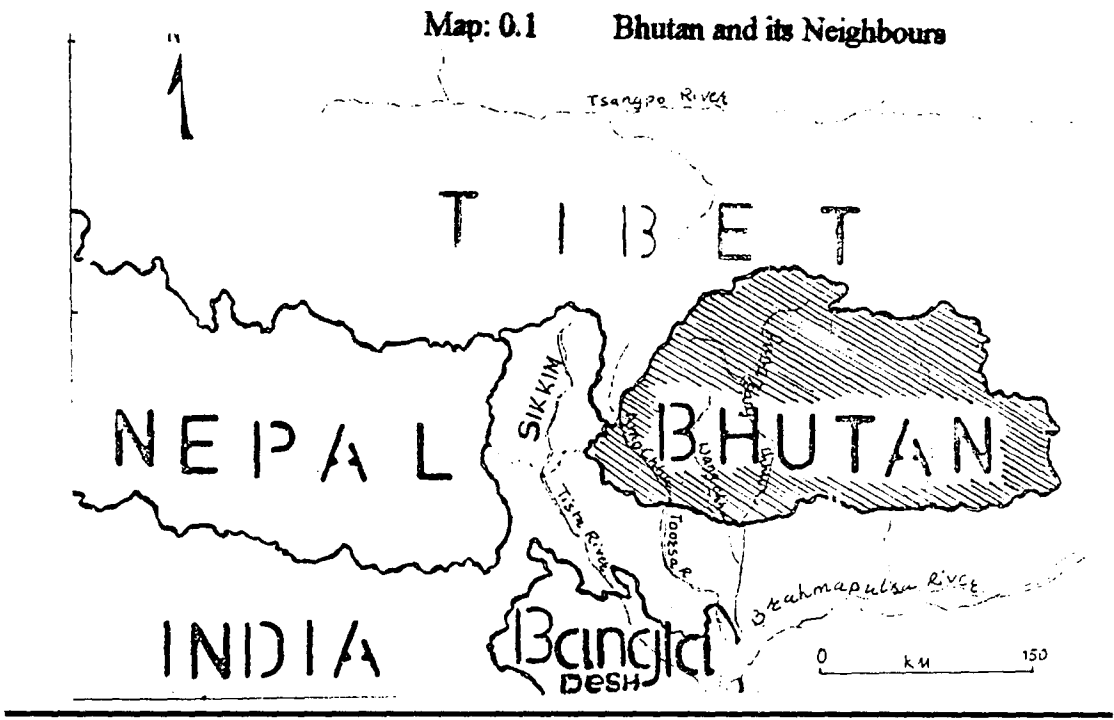
6. Summary and Conclusion	203-208
<i>Glossary</i>	209
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	217
<i>Appendices</i>	
I. Correspondences with the Royal Government of Bhutan	221
II. Some Persons and Personalities	223
III. Doya (Lhokpu) Language	232
IV. Genealogical Chart of Laskey (L) Riuh	239
<i>Plates</i>	243
<i>Index</i>	259

Introduction

The Land and People of Bhutan

Bhutan is a land-locked Kingdom in the eastern Himalayan hills. It has its own distinct cultural identity characterised by *Drukpa kagyü* sect of Mahayana fold of Buddhism. Numerous huge fortresses (Dzong) and monastries stand today to tell its past history of struggles to maintain its independent political status and identity. It is surrounded by Tibetan region of China in the north, Indian states of Sikkim in the west, Bengal and Assam in the south and Arunachal Pradesh in the east (Map 0.1). The country measure 46,570 sq. km. in extent and lies between 26°40' and 28°20' north latitudes and between 88°45' and 92°10' east longitudes. *Thimphu* is the capital of the country. There are 20 administrative districts called Dzongkhag (1995: 4).

Bhutan has several other names with which it has been known inside and outside the country. The several names seem to reflect different stages of cultural and historical development of the country. The name Bhutan itself has a Sanskrit root meaning high land or end of the land of Tibet (Bhot). This suggests a period of cultural influence from the south i.e Indian cultural influence over the north since earlier times, although, the brief political incursion of Cooch Rajas from the Bengal Duars into Bhutan could not withstand the Tibetan religious and cultural forces then, in Bhutan. The Tibetan influences into Bhutan gave it another name *Lho Mon*: the land of darkness in the south - at a certain period of time when the *Drukpa kagyü* sect of Mahayana Buddhism had not made much changes in the people's original way of life. In around the same period of time it was also known by another name *Lho Mon Tsenden jong* meaning southern mon country of cypress- a land of rich forest resources for the Tibetans at that period of time. Then, as Bhutan developed its own cultural traditions and political identity through a continuous process of cultural traditions and political



Map 0.1: Bhutan and its Neighbours

identity through a continuous process of cultural synthesis of its original *Bonism*¹ and that of Tibetan Buddhism it acquired a new name for its land and the people. Bhutan came to be known as *Druk Yul* - The Land of Thunder Dragon. The architect of Druk Yul was Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal - religious leader from Tibet who migrated to Bhutan during the first half of Seventeenth century. This stage heralded the emergence of an independent and occasionally powerful country under the simultaneous leadership of two kings at two levels - spiritual and temporal, up to the end of nineteenth century. It fought many wars with the Tibetan and the British and grappled with many internal revolts. Druk Yul persisted and prevailed over all the odds and consolidate its sovereignty under the leadership of a single line of hereditary kingship, only since 1907 when Ugyen Wangchuk was popularly enthroned. Bhutan opened out itself to the outside world from a state of having been known as the *Land of the Sleeping Dragon* (according to some observers) towards stability, peace and prosperity. Until very recent times, Bhutan has also been described as the Land of the Peaceful Dragon by some authors. Yet, there are few other observers who sees the modern Bhutan developing into a *democratic monarchy with roots deeply entrenched in the affection of the people*, (1988: 222).

Physiography

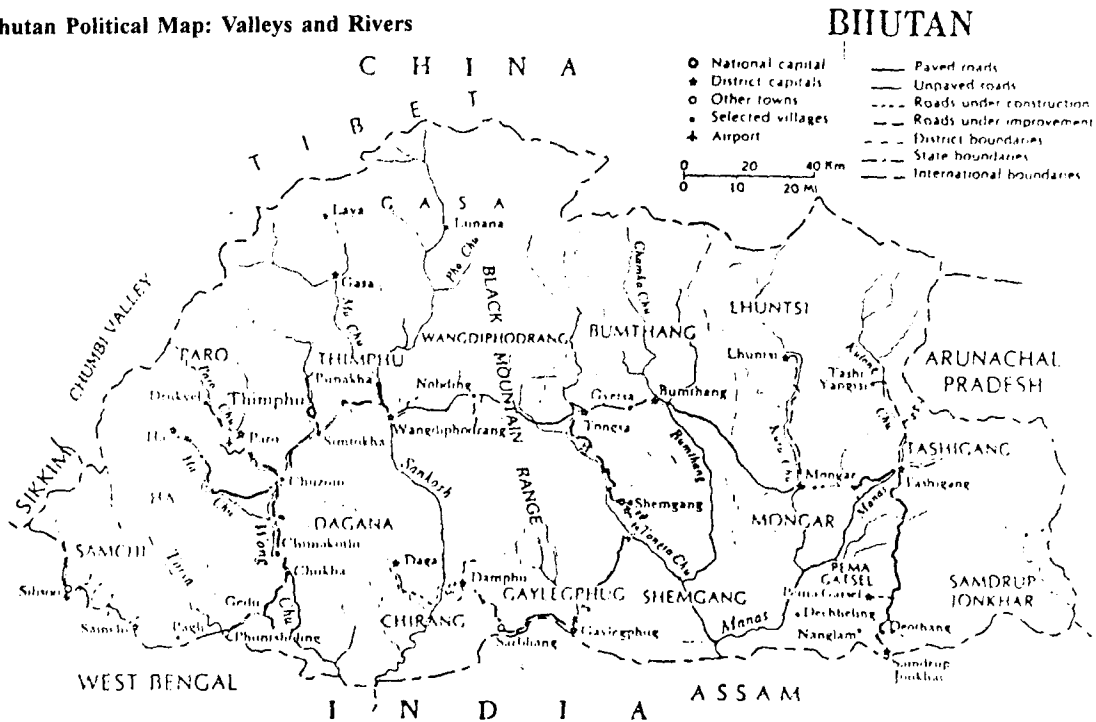
Bhutan has 3 distinct physiographical units, viz: Sub-Himalayas, the Inner Himalayas and Great Himalayas. Foothills along the Indo-Bhutan border fall under Sub-Himalayan region. Most of the valleys including Thimphu and *Paro* fall under Inner Himalayas and the northern Bhutan with snow capped mountains along the Tibetan borders falls under great Himalayas.

The foothills bordering India from east to west rise higher and higher from south to north direction.

In between several valleys separate the southern foothills and Great Himalayas the mountain ranges. Most of these valleys run north to southerly directions. Some of the main valleys are the *Paro*, *Thimphu*, *Punakha*, *Wangdiphodrang*, *Tongsa*, *Bumthang*, *Shemgang*², *Lhuntse* and *Tashigang*. These valleys (Map 0.2) are in the Inner Himalayas. All the major rivers flow through these valleys.

AmMochhu or the Toorsa River rising from Tibet is a swift and narrow river. It drains Chumbi valley of Tibet and enters India at

Map. 0.2 Bhutan Political Map: Valleys and Rivers



Phuntsholing after cutting across Samchi district southeasterly and further down joins the Brahmaputra River in the Duars.

Wangchhu or the Raidak River in India also rises from Tibet. Its main affluent are *Paro Chhu*, *Do Chhu*, *Ha Chhu*, etc. It drains the valleys of Ha, Paro and Thimphu before entering North Bengal and joins the Brahmaputra as Raidak. It is the longest river in Bhutan.

Mo Chhu or the Sankosh River rises in the Great Himalayan region. Their main affluents are *Pho Chhu* and *Mo Chhu* joining at Punakha valley. It passes through Wangdiphodrang and enters the Duar plains to join the Brahmaputra after assuming the name Sankosh. It is deep and a large river.

Dangme Chhu is the largest river in Bhutan. Almost the whole of eastern Bhutan is drained by it. Their principal affluents are the *Mangde Chhu*, the *Kuri Chhu* and *Dangme Chhu*. It enters Bhutan from eastern Indian frontiers and drains through Tongsa and Bumthang valleys. It further flows down south to India as the Manas and joins the Brahmaputra.

Important Valleys and Dzongs

All the valleys in Bhutan had been important power centres in the past at one time or other. There are huge Dzongs in these valleys at every strategic site. Important valleys in Bhutan starting from the west are Ha, Paro, Thimphu, Punakha, Tongsa, Bunthang Mangde and Tashigang.

Ha valley is the extreme west at an elevation of 8,700 ft. Ha Chhu flows through the valley. The valley is adorned with *Ha Dzong*. The present queen mother of Dorje families belongs to this valley. It has rich historical traditions and legends.

Paro valley is wide and lies at a height of 7,000 ft. towards the east of Ha. It has been an important cultural, political and commercial centre in Bhutan. Pa Chhu flows through it. *Rinchhen Pung Dzong*, *Ta Dzong* and *Drugyal Dzong* stand out in the valley at strategic locations. Paro had direct trade links with Bengal and Tibet. Paro valley has only airport of the country with regular flights to neighbouring countries and overseas.

Thimphu valley is situated at an average elevation of 8,500 ft. Wang Chhu flows through this valley. *Tashichhodzong* (often known as the fortress of the glorious religion) is the most modern Dzong of

the kingdom and *Dechenchholing* (the king's palace) are situated in this valley.

Bumthang valley has *Byakar* Dzong. The valley is broad at an altitude of 9,700 ft. Bumthang River a tributary of Manas flows through the valley. Punakha valley lies towards the north-east of Thimphu at an elevation of 4,800 ft. Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu flow through this valley. It is at the confluence of these two rivers that the huge *Punakha* Dzong stands imposingly. This Dzong was the seat of power and politics in medieval Bhutan. Mangde valley is located in the east with the massive and imposing Tongsa Dzong at an altitude of 7,500 ft. on the banks of Mangde Chhu. The present king is the descendant of Tongsa Penlop who found monarchial and hereditary kingship in Bhutan in 1907. Tashigang valley lies at an altitude of 3,500 ft. Its Dzong is built on the bank of Dangme Chhu.

Climate, Forests and Agriculture

The foothill region adjoining the Bengal Duars and Assam plains has sub-tropical monsoon climate. This region has excessive rainfall with average temperature of 20°C and hot and humid throughout the year.

The region is abundant in deciduous natural vegetation. Wild animals like rhinos, elephant, guars, tigers, sambars, bears and many different species of monkeys are found. The forest produces different species of trees like sissou, khair, sal, semal. Besides, the forest also provides space for large-scale cash crop cultivation like caradamom and orange forming a substantial wealth for the country. People in this region practice shifting and terrace field cultivation. Rice, maize, millet is a major food crop.

The central region, which lies within inner Himalayas, consists of high mountains, valleys and major rivers. The climate in relatively lower valleys of Punakha and Wangdiphodrang is moderate and it is extremely cold in Thimphu, Ha, Paro and Bumthang at higher elevation. This region is also rich in evergreen forest resources with different species of pine trees and wild animals.

Agriculture is mainly confined in fertile valleys like Thimphu, Paro, Punakha, Wangdiphodrang, and Tongsa. Rice is principal crop and apple is grown as cash crop. Major population is concentrated in these valleys.

The northern region lies in the Great Himalayas along Tibetan borders. High peaks- *Gangkar Puensam* (24817 ft), *Jomolhari* (23997 ft), *Masang Gang* (23756 ft) *Tsenden Gang* (23100 ft) *Melunghi Gang* (23100 ft) are located in this region. The lofty ranges above 16500ft remain snow covered and barren but alpine vegetation thrives to feed Yak, *Takkin*, cattle and sheep in summer. The climate is dry and cold. Birch, rhododendron, juniper, fir and spruce are found here. Population in this region is sparse.

People and Population

Bhutanese people may be said to be composed of different racial elements although people of Tibeto-Mongoloid origin with distinct features of cultural patterns. Drukpa Kagyu-form the predominant section of people in the national and political life in Bhutan. This section of the people of Tibetan extraction is known as the *Ngalom* in Bhutan. People of Indo-Mongoloid origin form another minority section of people with distinct cultural patterns. They are settled in southeastern part of the kingdom. They are popularly known as the *Sharcopa* in Bhutan. Yet another sizeable population is of the Indo-Aryan origin that flowed into Bhutan from Bengal and Assam. They are mostly Nepalese officially designated as *Lhotshampas*, who belong to many ethnic groups such as the *Rais*, the *Gurungs*, the *Limbus*, the *Bahun*s, the *Chhetris*, and the *Tharus*. There are also other minority groups like the *Brukpas*, the *Khengpas*, and the *Doyas* within the Indo-Mongoloid groups who speak different dialects and have distinct cultural patterns and ways of life (1980: 17).

According to an ad-hoc official census taken in 1969, the population of Bhutan was about 1,000,000 and urban population was about 30,000. The population of Bhutan was estimated at 1.26 million in 1988 (1992: 31) though in very recent times the figure is being quoted as 0.75 million³.

Languages

The official language of Bhutan is the *Dzongkha*, although in the southern part of Bhutan Nepali language (*Lhotsham*) has also become an official means of communication and *lingua franca*. According to Bikrama Jit Hasrat, there are four major language groups and approximately 13 to 14 minor dialects in Bhutan. The four major languages are the *Chhoeki* in the northern part of Bhutan: the national

language Dzongkha, derived from the former and spoken by the Ngaloms in the northern part of Bhutan. *Sharcopkha* spoken by the Sharcopas in the eastern part of Bhutan, and the Lhotsham of the Nepalese spoken as *lingua franca* in the southern part of Bhutan (1980: 19). No detailed information on the 13-14 minor dialects spoken in Bhutan were available till date.

Background to the Study

The Doyas have not been studied and documented anywhere so far in a systematic fashion. In this respect, they are less fortunate than many other ethnic communities who live in this part of Himalayan region. Not only they are one of the less known and minor ethnic community in Bhutan they also do not matter much in the socio-political affairs of the country. They are also one of the most unexposed people in Bhutan. The present work is aimed at bringing to light the distinct socio-cultural identity of the people and report on their socio-economic situation.

From the late nineteenth century onwards the Doyas have been mentioned only a few times as a people of Bhutan by a very limited number of scholars and observers. However, no one attempted to write comprehensively of them. The only exception so far is the nine-page paper entitled: *The Doyas: A Small Community in Bhutan* by B. Majumdar, who set the target to present in his own words a *first hand account through his on-the-spot investigation...to Tapakhan, a Doyagaon situated 15 kms from Totapara in 1979*. He collected some general and some significant information about the livelihood practices, religious life, beliefs, festivals, rituals relating to birth, marriage and death, and social organisation, etc. in his report (1991: 141-149). Unfortunately, his report had its own limitations and suffered from the problems of over generalisation about the ways of life of the people. It also made some incorrect information on several counts about the people's ways of life needing critical review to rectify, clarify and elaborate wherever necessary. I consider that the problems in his report arose because of the limited opportunity of knowing the people and the methodology employed in his studies, which were inevitable given the limitations within which the study was made. Nevertheless, some clarifications need to be attended first. Places of Doya settlements in Bhutan like 'Tapakhan' and 'Lamteykhan' as mentioned in his report should have been *Taba* and *Ramteykha* (I have also come across the

word 'Dramteykha') to the best of my knowledge. 'Dorkhasiddim' should have been read as Dorokha, which is the sub-divisional headquarters in Samchi district.

It also needs to be noted that no Doya settlement is there at *Dorokha* in present times⁴ where the *Dogapa* and Nepali community reside at present. Further as has been noted by Majumdar himself that he could not contact the Doyas living in *Lotukuchu*. But, it must be mentioned that of the two settlements of the Doyas, Lotukuchu group of villages holds the central position, one reason of it being the larger concentration of population therein, the other being the proximity of the place to the historical relics of the Doyas, as has been mentioned by B.Chakravarti (1980). It appears from a close examination of his paper that the author, even while making a pioneering effort on the subject, was only casually familiar with the people concerned, and did not have either the time or opportunity to pursue the subject as deeply as was needed.

The Doyas are a group of pre-literate people in Bhutan making barely 0.136% of the total population. However, it is very difficult to form a correct estimate of their relative importance because the total population of Bhutan, which was estimated at 1,260,000, is itself not beyond doubts (1995: 7). The Doyas have their own traditional ways of life and belief systems that persist despite the influence of Drukpa Kagyu Sect of Mahayana Buddhism that is officially being promoted in the state⁵ and Nepali communities who live in their immediate neighbourhoods.

Very little is known about these people and practically nothing is known about their historical background because no mention is made in any of the older Chronicles and official records of Bhutan. The British and other Indian visitors to the kingdom, of course sometimes mentioned the Doyas, without any significant elaboration upon them. Under the circumstances there are many people in Bhutan and elsewhere who do not know anything about these people⁶. It was perhaps, for the first time that the Bhutanese National Weekly Newspaper, the *Kuensel* (1987: 25 July) brought out a report on these people attracting attention of administration and the general public towards their deplorable socio-economic conditions. The measures taken up for the development of these people by the Royal Government of Bhutan were also reported. The report recognised the Doyas as a distinctive ethnic community in Bhutan.

The Doyas live in two separate communities called Lotukuchu and Taba-Ramtey under Samchi Dzongkhag (District). They have been recorded under many different names such as *Doiya* or *Roiya* in D.Sunder's *Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars* (1895: i-viii), *Daya* in B. K. Roy Burman's *Dynamics of Persistence and Change of a Small Community Totos* (1958: 28) and *Dahyas* in Bikrama Jit Hasrat's *History of Bhutan* (1980: 17). However, in Bhutan while they are popularly known as the Doya and called as *Lhop* by the Ngalom (the Drukpa of northern Bhutan), the Doyas themselves prefer to be known as Lhopu.

Most of the historical accounts and reports relating to Bhutan and adjoining areas of 19th and 20th century available to me were disappointing by the absence of any descriptive account of the Doyas except for some general information and brief mention of ethnological propositions.

It is needless to say that description of any society is comprehensible only when it is portrayed in the context of a larger socio-cultural and historical context of the people and region that surround them. The point assumes importance particularly because the whole of northeast frontier of India along the southern Himalayan region has witnessed a continuous flux of population of different creeds and ethnic origins since ancient times (Hutton, J H: 1963). The cultural and political confrontations of different ethnic groups of diverse customs, creeds and colours must have also resulted in synthesizing number of mixed cultural and racial groups of people. This is precisely another problem area with regard to ethnic relation of Doyas with other tribes especially the *Meches*, *Totos*, *Koch* and *Monpas* in this region that requires further investigation.

However, for the purpose of the present work a review of certain historical and political antecedents of the country relating to the Doya region and the contemporary socio-economic and political situations of the country in which they find themselves would help us comprehend and elucidate the plight of the Doyas much better.

Historical Antecedents of the Country

About the earlier history of Bhutan Ashley Eden (1864: 108) records that Bhutan belonged to a tribe called *Tephoo* who believed to be people of Cooch Behar. They are defeated in fight with the

Tibetan Sepoys sent by the Lassa Government. Consequently, they left Bhutan leaving behind some of them⁷.

Bose, K.K. (1815: 110) gives another account, which Eden claims to be a Booteah version. According to Bose, Bootan was at the time . . . ruled by a Raja of the Cooch Tribe. When the first Dharam Raja came, he (Dharam Raja) performed many miracles . . . contrary to the observances of Cooch tribe, . . . at which the Cooch Raja was so terrified that he disappeared with his whole family and servants underground, and slaves of Cooch Raja . . . who remained were instructed in his (Dharam Raja) own religious faith and customs and . . . their descendants still remain at Poonakha and form the caste or tribe called Thep (1864: 339). Subsequently, more and more Tibetans poured in and slowly and slowly they became a dominant religio-political power and started increasing their dominion in the neighbouring regions, Sikkim in the west and Duars in the south by domination over many ethnic inhabitants or driving them away.

Further, B. Chakravarti records, Some Koch were pushed south of Bhutan organised themselves again under the name Hajo...who ruled the western portion of Kamrupa. It is said . . . their policy was to coalesce with the Mech and the Kacharis so as to be able to defeat the contemporary Koch and the Tephoo rulers of Bhutan (1980: 15).

At such juncture of historical formation in Bhutan, a process of creating an independent power centre around the tenets of a different sect of Buddhism was going on under the stewardship of the would be Dharam Raja. In the course of time, the migrant Tibetans of Drukpa persuasion into Bhutan amassed much of power and became a despotic and feudal society by subjugating ethnic tribes, practising wide spread slavery, indulging in forced labour and treacheries on dominated groups of people. Nirmala Das in her book *Dragon country* identifies this period as, . . . the period marked by the disappearance of original inhabitants and advent of Tibetan influence on the traditional culture (1974: 17).

At the backdrop of these historical premises there is a possibility of picturing out some ethnic minority groups of people who were culturally dominated, politically reduced to insignificance, demographically displaced, socially disturbed and economically exploited, taking shelter at many different locations in the deep forests of Bhutan. The process was accentuated by the consolidation of British

rule in India. It is possible that Doyas may have been one among those communities that were affected first by the process of Drukpa consolidation in Bhutan, and subsequently by the advent of British rule in the neighbouring India.

Against this background, we can understand why some scholars feel inclined to trace an ethnic relation among many small ethnic communities in Bhutan. Michael tentatively traces some similarities between *Tok-top* who in turn are known to Bhutanese as *Mon-pa* of *Mang-sde-lung*, *Kheng* and *gZhong-sgar* called *Upper and Lower Toktokha* in the south of *Pagro* and the people living in *Taba-Dramten* and *Lotukuchu* in the area of southern Bhutan west of the border town of *Phuntshogslling* all as possible splinters of *gDung* people who once ruled whole over Bhutan before the migration from the north (1980: xvii-xviii). And B.K. Roy Burman relates *Daya* who lives 6 miles from *Totapara* in West Bengal bordering Bhutan. In his unpublished Thesis based on different oral versions of the past history of the *Totos* in the adjoining area of Bhutan he wrote, *Totos and Daya previously used to live together inside Bhutan. . . . Toto and Daya were once cousins . . . and Toto must have migrated from Bhutan. . . . Paro chief ordered Toto to settle at Totopara for portorage works, and . . . Toto migrated out due to out-break of war between Bhutia and the Mech, further, Totos . . . have common origin with the Koch* (1958: 55-56).

Extrapolating from the studies on the impacts of Bhutia political-cultural influence on *Toto* he further says, *. . . no traditional structure of the Toto existed at all. Toto was a new Tribe - a child of Bhutia state-craft* (1958: 86).

His observations scratched only the edge of the problem and it demanded a comprehensive explorative ethnography on all these seemingly related ethnic people for a meaningful remark on their traditional culture and relations.

The scholars are generally inclined to trace *Bonism* or some form of spirit and nature of worship as earlier religion of ethnic people of Bhutan before the arrival of Buddhism from Tibet. B. Chakravarti classified all the ethnic people of Bhutan into three major Linguistic groups i.e. the *Mon*, the *Khen* and the *Dzongkha* speaking people thereby subsuming rest of the ethnic minority groups of people under the three major groups denying a justice to socio-cultural particularities and identities of the latter. However, Doyas did not escape his

observation, although it is difficult to find out to which group Doyas may be related. In his passing note, on the Doyas of Lotukuchu he made a very significant point about the historical background of the Doya not found in any other books. He writes, *they (Doyas) once ruled over this portion of Bhutan (Western Bhutan foothills) and the ruins of the capital of Doya kings are found at Demchukha (Denchukha?), north-east of Dorokha* (1980: 18). Incidentally, B.K. Roy Burman also traces the original settlement of the Totos in Deingche garden in Bhutan from where they were displaced after the boundary demarcation between the British and Bhutan Government, . . . *following an order from the chief of Paro* (1958: 54). Unfortunately for me it is difficult to say if the two names of places are at separate location or they are corruption in the pronunciation of the same place name by different people.

History of Bhutan has been marked by political instability, internal strife among rival political powers under the leadership of different Lamas from Tibet professing to spread different sects of Buddhism from as early as 18th century to as late as 19th century. The situation worsened when the responsibility of administration of the land went into the hands of Penlops, resulting in rivalries and continuous confrontations among them. Conditions of lower section of people were at the worst. Ashely Eden aptly described the situation:

The misery of the subjects of a Government thus constituted can hardly be aggravated and it is not to be wondered at that the country is rapidly becoming depopulated and relapsing into waste . . . (Penlops) exercise authority of life and death, but it must not be inferred from this that there is anything like judicial system in the country . . . (Revenue system) strictly speaking there is no system. The only limit on the Revenue demand is the natural limit of the power of the officials to extort more. Nothing that a Booteah possesses is his own, . . . The lower classes, whether of villages or public servants, are little better than the slaves of the higher officials. In regard to them no rights of property are observed, . . . No official receives a salary: he has certain districts made over to him, and he may get what he can out of them . . . a certain portion of his gains he is compelled to send to the Durbar, and the more he extorts and the more he sends to the Durbar the longer his tenure of office is likely to be (1864: 115-118).

However, discounting certain extent of exaggeration by Eden in his book it is still apparent that the lingering of the past attitudes on the part of some of the administrators persists in remote areas like Samchi.

Contemporary situations of the country relating to the Doyas

From this, rather despotic socio-economic situation when Bhutan entered into 20th century, peace and a stable form of Government emerged under a single centre of authority. A hereditary Monarchy was institutionalised under a single centre of authority. A hereditary Monarchy was institutionalised under the leadership of the King Ugyen Wangchuk in 1907 by abolishing the system of government under the Dhuram Rajas, Deb Rajas and the Penlops. A sovereign kingdom was founded but much remained to be done in the hand of the first king to organise the whole administrative system and regenerate its economy by exploiting its resources for the development of the country. There was a dire need of manpower to exploit the rich forest resources, Bhutan started opening its doors to neighbouring countries, attracting manpower, co-operation and help to develop its economy.

Hordes of Nepalese from the neighbouring regions immigrated and fulfilled the labour requirements. They were given land freely to settle and participate in the development works (1993: 3), in a relatively secular environment. Decades passed when Nepali population swelled up to a considerable proportion and posed a perceived cultural threat to Drukpa-kagyü way of Bhutanese national culture and demography. A political crisis surfaced in the whole of south Bhutan in 1990 when the Nepalese took to streets demanding greater democratic rights of representation in the present governance of the country. The age-old cultural and political identity of the country was questioned. It was a movement for re-defining the national cultural and political identity of the country. Under the circumstances, the slogan of One Nation One People was not only raised by the Royal Government of Bhutan, but it was seriously sought to be implemented by them causing opposition among a large section of the Lhotshampas.

Loyalty of the people particularly in the southern Bhutan (where maximum migrants lived) to the sovereignty of the country and the king was in question. A clear line emerged between Bhutanese denizens and other sections of people who acted against the interest of the nation. The latter group of people was popularly known as the *Ngolop* or the

anti-nationals. In the ensuing political crisis in the southern Bhutan ethnically affined people, who otherwise, largely remained neglected and unheard got ever-greater attention of the administrators. Doyas as one among them came into the spotlight. Concerted efforts were on to uplift and integrate the least known ethnic people of Bhutan with deliberate attention from the government. There were attempts to rename the *Sengten* Primary School as *Doya Sengdhyen* Primary School and many other attempts were made to rename places and people in the southern Bhutan that had some kind of Nepali cultural shed. These changes affected the Doyas as well.

Boarding facilities in the only primary school at Sengten, which used to be opened to all the communities without discrimination became to be reserved for the Doya children exclusively for their upliftment. Nepalese children who were in the boarding were asked to attend the school as day-scholars. Around 50-60 Doya youths were picked up for militia training for maintaining the security of the area against anti-national militants and miscreants. Many a high ranking security personnel, officials and religious heads often visited the school and inquired into the security and development concerns of the Doyas, in particular. Strict land regulation ceilings were enforced. Active efforts were on to open a motor-able road to the Doyas in 1992 and 1993. Special national language classes were organised at several places in the Doya villages during 1992-93 for national integration causing immense heartburns to the neighbouring Nepali communities. This was done to promote the use of the national language as against the popularity of Lhotsham language among the Doyas. Adult people were also trained on the national code of conduct (*Driglam Namzha*) in the school premises and emphasis was laid on the national cultural forms of dance and songs in the school as part of the curriculum.

The Royal Government of Bhutan also encourages them to assert their identity as Lhop to highlight their cultural affinity to the Bhutanese mainstream and to differentiate them from the Nepali community in the context of the present socio-political situation of the country. Encouraged by these efforts the Doyas began to deliberately register their wards names with the title Lhop in the school registers instead of the common use of the title Doya or their preferred title Lhopu. The reason is, people who matter in the school were the Drukpas. It is possible that the title Doya may go into disuse from the common parlance soon in Bhutan. However, the social reality is that they are

still popularly known as the Doya and fewer people call them Lhop in Bhutan. In this study, I would be using the same name Doya more often to prevent further confusion and Lhop and/or Lhopu in certain contexts only although, it is still difficult to say which is the endo-ethnonym of the people themselves.

It is in this context an ethnographic account of the Doyas gains its importance to understand the changing processes that the society is undergoing. A reference point has to be there to see the changes in time to come. There has also to be a meaningful dialogue to guide the developmental needs of the people lest they should suffer from an identity crisis later.

Today, Doyas are poised for a change under pressure from the government and Doyas also seem to respond positively to the changing factors even at the cost of losing peace and harmonious relation with their neighbouring Nepali community. They now strongly feel that the Nepalese had forced their way in their locality and that they are being dominated by them. It is feared that an ethnic conflict between the communities may ensue in the region in near future.

Objectives of the Study

Doyas have not been properly understood largely because they have lived in the shadow of dominant cultural groups inside Bhutan. Their cultural and political identity has been systematically undermined as a minority group in the course of nation-building processes of the country. They have remained inaccessible to the outside world for wide ranging social intercourse due to cultural, geographical and political barrier between India and Bhutan. The little information available about the people are mostly based upon secondary sources and rarely, if ever, a visit to Taba which is easier to access. The Lotukuchu group of Doya represents 70% of Doya population but they have not been studied so far. Hence, the picture of the people that emerge out of the little information is hazy and incorrect. Moreover, prolonged socio-cultural intercourse of the people with the dominant national culture and the influence of the Nepali culture in their immediate environment seem to have affected certain changes in the traditional ways of the pre-literate Doya people. Most of them speak fluent Nepali outside their communities. The people have been exposed to modern education: occupations and the fast growing market economy only during the recent past. The political upheaval in southern Bhutan

has also affected the Doya people, and there are conscious attempts to assimilate the Doyas to the dominant national culture of the Drukpas. Doyas as an ethnic minority are disposed to further change and we may have nothing on record about their traditional culture. Therefore, the objectives of the present work were mainly four.

Firstly, it was to present a first hand ethnographic account of the Doya ways of life. Secondly, it was to make an attempt to understand the past and present socio-political situations of the country and the region that affected the Doyas. Thirdly, it was to study the basic structure and nature of Doya social organisation through their kin terms and relations. Fourthly, it was to study the traditional economy and the livelihood pattern of the people and the impacts of the changing socio-economic situation of the region on the traditional economy of the people.

Although the present work was intended to give a fuller picture of the Doyas touching upon almost all aspects of the people's ways of life it has its own limitations also. The religious and political aspects have been inadequately explored and in-depth studies on several areas of social and cultural life were overlooked.

Geographical Location of the Study Area

The area of study is confined within the Dorokha subdivision of southeastern Samchi district of Bhutan. The study was mainly carried out among the Lotukuchu group of Doyas comprising of five contiguous settlement areas namely: *Satakha*, *Sanglung*, *Upper and Lower Lotukuchu*, and *Lotok*. In addition, three neighbouring Rai villages namely: *Bisgaon*, *Lapcheygaon* and *Lumbey* were also studied for comparative purposes. These villages are located along the slopes of Sengten hills. At a later stage, a general survey of the whole region including Dorokha and *Denchukha* located on either sides of AmMochhu river was also done touching upon the socio-cultural aspects of the *Hapas*, *Dogapas*, *Nepalese*, *Lepchas*⁸ and Doyas of Tabar-Ramteykha communities.

This study area, in particular the Doya region is kept under restricted category by the Royal Government of Bhutan. Outsiders without proper permit are not allowed access to this region.

Approach, Method and Techniques

Doyas for me was just a fortunate encounter when I voluntarily took up a teaching job on contract under the Royal Government of

Bhutan in the beginning of 1990. I just wanted to earn for myself while seeing something new and exciting in a strange land after doing Master's Degree in Social Anthropology from the Delhi University in the early part of the same year.

As a student I always stood in favour of the oppressed and neglected for justice and humanity. It was this concern of mine that interested me to voluntarily undertake the study of the Doyas in particular and their neighbouring communities in general in the kingdom of Bhutan while serving as a fulltime teacher in the Sengten Primary School in the remote Doya region, for use in posterity.

The present work therefore, is the result of a very personal and conscious effort of knowing the Doyas, their ways of life in particular and their neighbouring communities in general in an attempt to give an inside story of those who have been undermined and neglected for so long.

This report presents a factual account of the people in the way they see their ways of life and I as a student of anthropology and a concerned outsider understand of them from a very close personal interactions, observations and occasional participations in their personal and social life activities during my four years of stay among them. 'Therefore, certain extent of Doya biasness cannot be ruled out in whole narration as against others in their surrounding. Further, with due respect to all other communities mentioned in the text, I have deliberately used the general geographical titles to refer to group of people like; *Ngalom*, *Lhotsham*, *Sharcop*, etc. to avoid unnecessary misrepresentation of specific communities in this report.'

It is a humble attempt to present the Doyas ways of life in as much as it was an explorative nature to give an ethnographic account of the society and economy of the Doya people. Since, it was a maiden and a private venture for me in a virgin area, the work was carried out in very peculiar and difficult circumstances. There were lots of limitations and constrains during the field and thereafter in writing up this report in the present form.

In the first place, there was no body that could understand and appreciate the anthropological concern for the people while in Bhutan. There was no guidance, support and encouragement from any quarters during the fieldwork for the first two and half years. I was often taken as a crazy fellow at the best or a suspicious character sometimes,

inquiring about people's social affairs beyond what was subject of banal discussion about people in general. I also discovered, later that the Royal Government of Bhutan does not necessarily encourage any outsider to research in Bhutan.

Secondly, I did not have a chance to update my knowledge of Anthropology during the research and after, first because of my employment as a primary school teacher in a remote corner of Bhutan, and then because I did not qualify for academic profession in India. Even when I managed to register myself as an external Ph. D. candidate at the centre for Himalayan Studies of the North Bengal University it was not possible for me to seek regular guidance from my supervisor, as I had to take up a job in a voluntary organisation immediately after leaving Bhutan.

Thirdly, because of the full engagement in the school on all the working days there was limited option to adopt the Participant-observation method of field research even while I tried to maintained the basic approach by taking residence among the Doyas, sharing food and shelter, participating in their activities and observing the spontaneous events of life unfolding whenever and where ever chance happened. I always tried to be in the village - reaching out to every nook and corner on all holidays and off the school hours.

Therefore, the method followed for the study falls in the borderline of participant observation in the fashion no longer that much in vogue, of the classical anthropological inquiry into a virgin territory. Information were collected through observations of and informal interactions with the people as intensively and extensively as was possible and without any conscious efforts to select only few respondents from among the people and yet to be so close with the people to be seen as one of theirs. However, the Royal Government of Bhutan also thrust an opportunity upon me to conduct a formal survey of the people in March 1995. I utilised the opportunity to supplement my study by collecting some data on some aspects of economy and kin terms of the Lepchas, Dogapas and the Rais for comparative purposes.

Rapport with the people

I landed up in Sengten without in any preconceived notion in mind. All that I knew was that I was there to see something new.

Once at Sengten, it took sometimes to adapt to the local environment and the exotic life-style. My colleagues in the school helped me to know the place and also the people. I had to go slow as I was not conversant in Nepali, which was the commonly spoken language, there. It took some five months to pick up a workable knowledge of the local language with the help of my colleagues, school children and Doya staff (non-teaching) in the school. By the end of the year I could manage to speak some Doya language with the help of Doya children in the school. During the same year, my colleagues also took me around the Nepali and Doya villages nearby the school. We were always welcomed with drinks and presentations. While being at Sengten I became quite acquainted with almost all the local people as many of them used to come to the school premises for some work⁹ or the other.

Children in the school and villages were dirty and unkempt. Some of them were afflicted with common diseases, which could be easily attended. I took up the responsibility of looking after the health of the children in the school and provided personal care to all of them. This responsibility brought me very close to the children that in turn helped me a good deal in developing close relation with their parents at home. I always kept in the company of the children who taught me their language and educated me about their place and ways of life. They often took me to their homes for seeing sick person in the village and also for showing me their homes and villages.

They became good friends, teachers and guides for me in learning about the Doyas. My command over the *Lhokpu* language delighted the people and they developed a special liking for me. Doya children used to call me *Pang*, which meant paternal uncle even while in the school. However, it was not enough for an ethnographer who was also a schoolteacher working from morning till evening although the interest and ability to talk in the local language and also the first-aid services I was providing had created a special place for me in the village. I was deliberately looking for an opportunity to take shelter in one of their homes. But there were two problems. One, the traditional houses did not have space for an outsider. Two, my colleagues were discouraging me as they could not make any sense of my adventurism. They also considered Nepali villages were a better place if taking shelter in village was so desired. Nevertheless, there was a will and so there was a way.

Education as a state subject was free in Bhutan. Doya children in the school were given stipend to encourage them pursue high school level education. Dropout problem of Doya children and their parents' reluctant attitude to education was acknowledged as a big problem by the district administration. I volunteered to take this opportunity to stay in the village among people for special admission drive of Doya children in the school. And thereon, I continued to stay but in the village at different places and different times in Lotukuchu between 1991 and 1994. The Headmaster of the school was convinced and I succeeded in obtaining a record enrolment of Doya children in 1992 session. *Dasho Dzongdag* (District Collector) and other heads of department in the district visited the school and the Doyas during the period. I had opportunity to express my interest in the development of the Doyas and I was acknowledged as one of the Doya sympathisers. In 1992 I was able to send a preliminary report on the Doyas entitled *Doyas: Past and Present* to then Director, Education Department of the Royal Government of Bhutan (Appendix I). By the end of 1993 the Director wrote back appreciating my report and at the same time seeking my help in developing a document of the people under a standing order from the Home Ministry of the Royal Government. After a brief follow up communication and personal meeting with him, I was given an order to formally and officially conduct a short but very productive survey for twenty days intensively among the Lotukuchu group of Doyas and a general socio-cultural survey of all the neighbouring communities including the Dogapas, Lepchas and other Nepali communities across the AmMochhu. A thirty five-page document to support and elaborate upon the previous report was submitted to the Director as result of the survey work.

Things were not so easy for me. My personal attachment with the Doyas and taking shelter among them was seen as a sort of detachment from the rest of the Nepali communities. They expressed their feelings by often calling me "Doya *juwain*" or "Doya *Bura*", meaning a resident-husband among the Doyas or a Doya old man. On the contrary, Doyas themselves found in me a *Chan* (son) for the elders, a *Pang* (*Paternal* uncle) or a *Pu* (elder brother) for the children and younger ones while I would always wonder why I was not addressed as *ku* (maternal uncle). It was a struggle to maintain a balance between the two communities.

I tried to maintain good relations with each and every *Karbari*

(village Heads) of neighbouring Nepali villages and also with some of the Nepali *Bijuwa* (Sorcerer) who frequented the Doyas for their healing services. I had occasions to accompany them in their night performances. I learnt a great deal from them about the Doyas, as they knew them also. They liked me, trusted me and even wanted me to take a Nepali girl for my wife.

While in the village I tried to reach out to everyone in every nook and corner of Lotukuchu group of villages with children as my guides and friends. I was affectionately welcomed at their homes. I used to get current information on every small and big incidents ranging from childbirth, funeral services, religious activities, family quarrels and seasonal activities in the villages. Sometimes the villagers would approach me seeking my help and intervention into their small or big personal problems. There were occasions when I received marriage proposals from among the Doyas also. There was an occasion when I announced my desire of adopting a young widow with a minor kid in Lotok village which however, remained unfulfilled.

Tools and Techniques of the Study

The major part of the study was carried out in very informal manner without using any of the conventional tools and techniques of interview. Much of the information collected in day-to-day interactions and personal observations and experiences were religiously recorded every day in personal dairies. Some of the genealogical charts and maps were worked out with my Doya friends and students. Wherever possible on the spot investigations, observations and participations in most of the social events were made to record facts about peoples' way of life. Home visits, round-the-fire discussions on matters of mutual interests over a drink and being of some help at times of crisis and needs also helped gain much insights and knowledge about peoples' perception and way of life. At a later stage, camera and tape recorder were used to record some social and cultural activities, folklores and songs of the people. Number of biographies were taken from a number of companion friends in informal interviews (Appendix II).

The draft report of all my findings about the Doya ways of life was presented to some of the learned elders and very few educated Doyas for necessary final crosschecking and verifications. The basic findings about them were appreciated and approved by Doyas at the last stage before leaving Bhutan in 1995.

Plan of Presentation

I have made a major focus on the social organisation, Kin terms and relations and livelihood pattern of Doyas in comparatively greater detail because of certain urgency that beset the present work.

Firstly, the traditional ways of life of the people are currently exposed to a fast changing socio-political scenario in the country. The little tradition of the Doyas is greatly influenced by the great tradition of the Drukpa cultural mainstream patronised by the Royal Government of Bhutan for their development. They are being weaned away from the influences of the Nepali culture into their ways of life in their immediate neighbourhood as part of national integration. The modern education through the schools and Health Service Centres in their vicinity and market economy is also affecting their ways of life bringing a change in their tradition and culture.

Secondly as this monograph is going to be first of its kind to give a first hand account of the people, I have also tried to give an overview of their ways of life touching upon all relevant aspects in relation to their immediate environment in an attempt to clarify many of the misleading information current among ethnographers and curious audiences outside.

The main report is distributed in five separate chapters besides the general introduction and the concluding sections. A general introduction to the land and people of Bhutan collected from different sources books and also my own knowledge and experiences relating to the historical antecedents and contemporary situation affecting the Doyas have been given in the Introduction chapter.

Chapter 1 presents the geographical location of the Doyas, their village settlements and social relations with other people in their surroundings, their demographic situation and oral account of demographic trends in the past, their family organisation, household articles, dresses, occupation, daily activities, food habits, health situation, recreational activities and recent educational development and modern occupation of the people.

Chapter 2 gives an account of their social organisation, origins of different lineages and associated deities, the nature of Doya matriliney and matrilocality, marriage rules and development cycle of a consanguinal family.

Chapter 3 describes Kin terms and relation of Doya society to a certain depth to show how an individual born is identified with certain roles and status with respect to sex of a person as s/he passes through the whole schema of social matrix of the society. An attempt is made to classify the Doya system along the Murdock, Lowie and Krichhoff typologies. At the end of this chapter an attempt is also made to compare and contrast the Doya system of kin term and relation with other systems existing in the neighbourhood of the Doyas in Bhutan to further elucidate the Doya system of social relation that makes them different from others.

Chapter 4 describes the rites and rituals that give meaning and essence to Doya ways of life during the transition of an individual from Birth to Death. It also tries to articulate the Doya philosophy of life and death from the way they respond to questions relating to different life situation.

Chapter 5 describes the economy and livelihood patterns of the people in relation to their natural environment and people around them. In this chapter, I have also tried to give a comparative study of means of livelihood and food production level among the Doya villages with that of a neighbouring Rai village with the help of exhaustive statistical data. Impacts of the market economy on the traditional economy and livelihood pattern of the Doyas are also discussed here in brief. An exhaustive data on household economy of each residential unit is provided at the end in several annexures.

Each chapter ends with a summary note and a brief summary and reflections of my experiences and learning from the Doya society and economy is given in the Summary and Conclusion at the end of the chapters. Correspondence with the Royal Government of Bhutan relating to my official involvement in the study of the Doyas and the persons and personalities who were closely associated with me during the whole length of my stay among the Doyas are also given in separate Appendices I and II, respectively at the end. Relevant documents and supporting information and data are provided as Annexure at the end of each chapter wherever, necessary. Other information and data that are not directly related to the present studies but provide important clue and insights to the racial background of the Doyas and their linguistic classification are provided in Appendix III. I am sure this information might provide some important clue to future researches

in the region. A detail genealogical chart of one of the major matrilineage among the Doyas that helps in elucidating the descriptions on the Doya social organisation and relations in chapters 2 and 3 is also given in a separate Appendix IV.

A detail list of local terms, words and local names of places often occurring in the text is reproduced in the Glossary.

References cited in this text follow simple style of putting only the author and page number of the source book in parenthesis. A detail list of select bibliography is given at the end of the chapters. Maps, sketches and charts are inserted at appropriate places while photographs/plates are given at the end of the book. Lists of all the illustrations are provided separately indicating the page numbers between which they are located in the text. Table are inserted inside the text at appropriate places. The local names of places, terms, words and phrases will be in *italics* only when they are appearing first time in the text. To distinguish the Doya names, terms and words from other languages spoken in the country the particular language is often indicated in parentheses in the text.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Chakravarti (1980: 30) claims that before the advent of Buddhism in Bhutan people had an indigenous religion, which was based on naturalistic belief in the sky gods (Iha), water gods (klu) and the earth gods (sabdag) and mountain gods (gnyans)
2. Spellings of names of several places in Bhutan have been recently rewritten according to Dzongkha phonetics. Some of these alternative names have been listed in the Glossary.
3. See also Himal (July/August 1992: 17) and Dorji, C.T.(1995: 7).
4. However, there used to be some Doya settlements around two to three hundred years ago says Guman Singh Gurung, a local respondent of Maney Gaon at Dorokha on my visit. The only remnant of the Doya at present times at Dorokha is the ruins of *Maney Chhorten* standing in the mid of paddy field. It is believed that the Doyas erected it. Local Nepalis residents including the Hapas (who migrate seasonally in the Doya region) believe that a powerful deity reside in the ruin of mud and stone structure which is still standing today. They worship the deity by offering meat, food and drinks every year.
5. At least three children were being imparted with religious education in the Lamaic tradition in different Monastries of the country although role of the Lama in the ritualistic life of the people was not in vogue.

6. It is surprising to note that a very recent publication on the *Political and Religious History of Bhutan* by a Bhutanese author recognises the *Monpas* as a mongloid stock as the original inhabitants of Bhutan living in the dense forests of southern Himalayas. It also says that a tribal people known as *Tabab - Damteb (Doya)* lives on the bank of *AmMochhu* under *Samtse Dzongkhag* indicating resemblance with the *Todas* race of north Bengal having different clothes and customs from all other people in Bhutan. Further, the author claims that there are eleven languages in Bhutan among which *Lhobi-kha* (which would literally mean language spoken by people in south) in *Taba and Damtey* villages under *Samtse Dzongkhag* (1995: 8-10). It must be borne in mind that there is no indigenous people called *Tabab-Damteb* and also that the people in the north Bengal bordering Bhutan are known as the *Totos* and not as *Todas* (*Todas* are infact a south Indian tribe) as far I know. The author also does not seem to have any knowledge about the race relations of many indigenous people in Bhutan as described by Michael Aris (1980).
7. *Tephoo, generally believed to have been people of Cooch Behar . . . a fight ensued with Tibetan sepoy sent by Lassa Government, Tephoo gave away and went down to the plains with an exception of few who remained in a mental capacity . . . whose descendants are to be found still holding the lowest offices about the Forts . . . their appearance clearly indicates their plains origin* (Eden, Ashley: 1864).
8. A minority group of Lepchas live in *Denchukha* hills just opposing the *Sengten* hills across the *AmMochhu*. *Hapas* are a migratory pastoral group who migrate into the *Doya* region seasonally from northern highlands of Bhutan. *Dogpas* were also migratory people from the northern highlands but they are settled permanently in large community at *Dorokha* sub-divisional H.Q.
9. A School Management and Development Committee comprising of the Headmaster, teachers, Block representative leader and heads of villages belonging to both Nepali and Rai communities used to meet at the school regularly to look into the labour and material requirements of the boarding school.