

# **SENIOR CITIZENS OF MEGHALAYA** *@A. Sinha*

**A Study of the Problems of the Aged and Need for Social  
Intervention**

**SPONSORED**

**Ministry of Welfare  
Government of India, New Delhi**

**A. C. Sinha**

**Project Director**

*Assisted by : Y.N. Karna & L.Y. Longchar and a Team of Researchers*

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY  
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## PREFACE

The report on the 'Senior Citizens of Meghalaya' is based on a survey sponsored by the Ministry of Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi, as a part of an all India study conducted on a common research strategy by about a dozen universities. The study emphasized on rural, scheduled castes and tribes and the aged destitute homes in particular. Keeping the above requirements in mind, we selected six locations in Meghalaya for collection of data : a compact tribal urban unit, an ethnically mixed urban locality, an old age home, and four villages in the Khasi Hills.

A team of researchers consisting of M/s Y. N. Karna, L. Y. Longchar, A. K. Nongkynrih, Sylvania Kynshi, D. Pyngrope, K. Martin collected data. M/s L. Y. Longchar and Y. N. Karna tabulated the data and Dr. N. P. Goel computed the statistical analysis. In course of data collection, Sister Anjaline of the Mercy Home, Nongthymmai, Mr. Larry Lynrah at Umpling, Mr. Hubert Kharshing at Mawpat, Mr. Daniel Gatphoh at Nongmynsong and the authorities of the village Durbar (Durbar Shnong) of Laitumkhrach, Mawkhar, Jaiaw, Nongrah, Mawpat, Umpling and Nongmynsong villages provided us with all possible assistance. Ms. Parul Das, IAS, Secretary, Department of Welfare, Government of Meghalaya, Shillong, provided all the information on the problem from the Government side. Without the support of the above named personnel it would have been impossible to complete the study on time. As Project Director, I am thankful to all of them individually and collectively. The report was typed by Mrs. Anita Blah, A. Dkhar, R. Dutta and logistics were provided by N. P. Sharma and S. Iawrod of the Department of Sociology. I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to their efforts.

Required support was extended to us by the excellent team of personnel of the Academic Section led by Mrs. R. Rynjah and Finance Department of the University. I shall like to thank them profusely. Lastly, my colleagues in the Department of Sociology provided a most congenial and encouraging atmosphere to pursue research activities. There were occasions, when I discussed the issues with my students and some of the colleagues in other Department. I shall like to record my thanks to all of them in general and Prof. R. Gopalakrishnan and Dr. Kynsai Warjri in particular. We also thank Col. M. D. Commisioriat (Retd.) of Assam Rifles Welfare Press for printing and binding the report. Lastly, without the active co-operation, at times inconvenient to them, extended to us by our respondents, it would have been impossible to complete the study. We thank them and numerous others, whose various forms of assistance can not be recorded for obvious reasons.

A. C. SINHA

## CONTENT

i. PREFACE	
1. INTRODUCTION	1 - 12
2. PERSONAL BACKGROUND	13 - 19
3. SOCIAL BACKGROUND	19 - 24
4. ECONOMIC BACKGROUND	25 - 31
5. HOUSING	32 - 34
6. HEALTH	35 - 41
7. SOCIAL ASPECTS	42 - 47
8. PAST-TIME AND ASSOCIATION	48 - 50
9. SERVICE FOR THE AGED	51 - 55
10 THE MERCY HOME	56 - 71
11. AN OVERVIEW	72 - 75
12. APPENDICES : QUESTIONNAIRES A & B	76 - 88
13. BIBLIOGRAPHY	89



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Population is growing fast despite policies and programmes to contain it. The growth in the population of the senior citizens is even faster. After attaining the age of sixty five years, the aged - specially in rural areas continue to engage in economically gainful work. It will be instructive to know is it because of their age-long work habit or some sort of economic compulsion. In any consideration of the problems confronting the aged, those relating to health figure prominently for obvious reasons. While malnutrition is ubiquitous, it adversely affects the aged about the most. Is it caused by lack of awareness or by lack of resources? Malnutrition coupled with lack of exercise becomes the source of numerous impairments and health problems. This is an area in which voluntary organisations can do much to generate awareness on the need for a balanced diet and exercise for the aged. Are they doing it?

Old age is often accompanied by blood pressure, pulmonary disorders, diabetes, and orthopaedic and cardiovascular problems. Further, the chronic and multiple nature of symptoms which the aged often suffer from pose no small problem in their proper diagnosis. What further complicates the situation is the possibility of genuine symptoms being confused for senescent debilities. Do these symptoms denote catabolic processes? Equally serious and frequent are mental health problems. Among the aged, anxiety states, depression, phobia, senile dementia and several other symptoms and diseases are reportedly widespread. Here, too, multiplicity of symptoms dogs diagnostic procedures. Worse still, often times, mental symptoms are passed over for hypochondriasis. Are mental health problems inevitable in old age?

Diminished economic activity of the aged, inflationary trends and changes in socio-economic values may give rise to myriad economic problems. There is reported some kind of a nexus between economic stringency and nutrition and medicare. Further, economic problems of the aged from unorganised sectors seem to be larger pushing, many of them even into destitution. Has society been able to evolve mechanisms to shield the aged from economic exigencies? On the other hand, processes of industrialisation, commercialisation, urbanization and democratization have unleashed a torrent of unmanaged fallout for almost everybody particularly for the elderly. Ironically enough, growing emancipation of women and their participation in work have also affected the situation of the aged. Taken together, the status and role of the aged have been somewhat degraded. Lonely, dependent and marginalised, they often suffer from feelings of worthlessness and alienation. Nonetheless, neither ageing nor societal changes can be halted or reversed. What is proper and viable is the invigoration and stream-lining of



proper and viable is the invigoration and stream-lining of services for the aged. Has this been possible to bring about?

It may be reiterated that, on account of several physical and mental processes, socio-economic and political changes, and modifications in the legal framework, senior citizens have become increasingly exposed to undeserved want requiring care and protection. In fact, several constitutional and civil and criminal law provisions aim at ensuring these. Intentions apart, what is the position in reality? In recent years, the country has come to have a fairly elaborate system of health care, public health, epidemic control programmes and a string of hospitals reaching out even to remote rural/tribal corners are its mention-worthy features. In many sectors, retired employees continue to avail medical services they used to do while in service. So it not, however, the case in all the sectors. The situation in the unorganised sector is more precarious. Most superannuated or aged people have to rely on and compete in general hospitals for medical attention. On the other hand, many hospitals are under-staffed, ill-equipped and overcrowded. Very few have a geriatric unit. Does the hospital system in the country cater to special needs of the aged?

In the organised sector, superannuating employees received retirement benefits such as pension, gratuity, provident fund, insurance maturity account, etc. In some sectors, after their death, the surviving spouse becomes eligible for family pension. The case with those in the unorganised sector is markedly different. The needy among them, at best, may look towards Old Age Pension (OAP). With a few exceptions, all the States and Union Territories have the OAP scheme. Nevertheless, its eligibility conditions are stringent, unrealistic and patently out of date. The quantum of assistance under OAP between Rs. 30 to Rs. 100 per month, is low and hardly bears any relation to cost of living. Population covered by the scheme in states is equally small. It ranges between 0.04 per cent to 1.43 per cent of the population. Is the outlay on OAP beyond the capacity or the level of economic development of the states?

In so far as the care of the aged is concerned, after family, institutional care or 'Home' proffers the most plausible alternative. Theoretically, a home provides for the basic needs of the aged, avenues for proper utilisation of their spared time and an ambience in which they live relatively free from worries, and with emotional satisfaction and self-esteem. Have we been able to evolve and standardise such facilities?

On the other hand, day care centres symbolise an innovative approach in the range of services for the aged. Less expensive to set up or to run, they are particularly suited to the socio-cultural environment in India. Even



completed 60 years of age and above. The sample was to be drawn from both rural and urban areas in the following numbers :

Institutions	:500-600 persons, or
Non-Institutions	:500-600 persons, or
Mixed of the above two	:500-600 persons

The various project directors were expected to evolve three sets of research tools (i) for respondents living in the institutions, (ii) those living within their social context, and (iii) for the institutions running old-age homes, etc. A meeting of the project directors was held in the last week of November 1990 in the Ministry of Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi to evolve common tools for the entire country for a comparative purpose. Consequently, two sets of two research tools were finalised to be administered to the respondents all over the country. The project directors were advised not to drop any question from the agreed sets of questions. However, it was suggested that individual project directors might add to the agreed sets of the questions. It was agreed that size of the respondents to be selected from the institutions was left to the project directors. Special efforts were to be made to include rural, scheduled castes and scheduled tribe respondents in the sample.

### THE NORTH EASTERN REGION

The North East Region comprises of the seven states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. It is a mountainous and riverine region with uniqueness of its population structure. While the valleys in Assam and Manipur are thickly populated by the caste Hindus, Muslims, and occasionally Christians, the hills states are predominantly tribal states. As the Hindu and Muslim communities will be covered elsewhere in different states of India, we feel it will be desirable to study the issues of the aged on the predominantly tribal communities of the Hill States. For that purpose, we propose to undertake this study in Meghalaya.

### STATE OF MEGHALAYA

#### Demographic Profile

Meghalaya, with an area of about 22,641 square Km. had a population of 13,35,819 in 1981 which gave an average density of 59 persons per square Km. The latest census records a population of about 1.8 million with an average density of 78 persons per square Km. 1981 census registered about 8 lakh males over 6.52 lakh females indicating a sex



ratio of 954 females per 1000 males. Similarly, 10.94 lakhs resided in the rural areas against 2.42 lakhs in urban centres suggesting 8.41 per cent urban population in the state. The annual birth rate and death rate were 30 and 8.3 per 1000 population. An overall 80.58 per cent population belonged to scheduled tribes, who were 86.13 per cent in the rural and 55.36 per cent in the urban areas. During the period of 1901 to 1981, the population of the state grew in a phenomenal way with a growth rate of about 400 per cent and on annual growth rate of 17.12 per cent (Table-1.1).

Table - 1.1

Decadal growth rate of population in Meghalaya, 1901-81.

Years	Meghalaya			East Khasi Hills District		
	Person	Decadal Variation	Change (%)	Person	Decadal Variation	Change (%)
1901	340254	-	-	127130	-	-
1911	394005	53481	15.71	147760	20630	16.23
1921	422430	28398	7.21	152910	5150	3.49
1931	480834	58434	13.83	182242	29332	19.18
1941	555820	74983	15.59	208487	26605	14.60
1951	605674	49854	8.97	228552	19705	9.44
1961	769380	169706	27.03	290500	61948	27.10
1971	1011699	242319	31.50	380650	90150	31.03
1981	1335819	324120	32.04	511414	130764	34.35

The data on birth and death rates collected a decade back for five years indicate an over-all decrease from 33.5 in 1976 to 31.1 in birth rate and 15.5 to 8.9 in death rate per 1000 persons (Table-1.2). Birth rate in rural areas went down from 36.1 to 32.9 and in urban areas from 26.6 to 23.1 per 1000 persons between 1976 to 1982. Similarly, urban death rate went down from 5.1 to 4.4 and the rural death rate decreased from 17.6 to 9.9 persons per 1000 in the period.



Table - 1.2

**Estimated Annual Birth Rate (BR) and Death Rate (DR) in  
Meghalaya, 1976-1982.**

Years	Combined		Urban		Rural	
	B.R.	D.R.	B.R.	D.R.	B.R.	D.R.
1976	33.5	15.5	26.6	5.1	36.1	17.6
1977	32.5	14.1	19.4	4.6	35.8	16.0
1978	32.0	10.2	17.8	5.0	34.7	11.3
1979	33.2	12.2	15.3	6.9	36.7	8.3
1980	31.2	11.1	18.8	4.7	33.6	12.3
1981	32.6	8.2	18.5	4.3	35.0	8.9
1982	31.1	8.9	23.1	4.4	32.9	9.9

Life expectancy rose from 32.45 years (31.66 years for female) for the Indian male in 1951 to 46.40 years (44.70 years for female) in 1971. A new born Indian male expected to live upto 58.1 years and female upto 59.1 years in 1990 (India Facts : 1991). Consequently, there is bound to be an increase in number of the senior citizens. We have the comparable data on sex basis for the years 1971 and 1981 for the country, North Eastern Zone and Meghalaya respectively (Table - 1.3).

Table - 1.3

**Age Distribution of Meghalaya, North Eastern Zone and India  
in 1971 and 1981 (in Percentage).**

	Ages	1971			1981		
		Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
India	60-64	2.62	2.64	2.61	1.73	2.73	2.73
	65-69	1.28	1.28	1.27	1.43	1.39	1.47
	70 +	2.06	2.02	2.12	2.33	2.28	2.39
N.E. Zone	60-64	2.00	2.13	1.86	2.18	2.25	2.11
	65-69	1.01	1.10	0.90	1.16	1.18	1.14
	70 +	1.96	2.08	1.83	2.35	2.34	2.35
Megha- laya	60-64	2.00	2.19	1.79	1.89	2.07	1.70
	65-69	0.92	0.98	0.85	0.95	1.00	0.90
	70 +	1.72	1.78	1.66	1.59	1.65	1.52

Sex and age wise data based on 1981 census collected from Meghalaya (Table - 1.4) suggest 2.41 per cent males and 2.01 per cent females with an over-all 4.42 per cent persons

above the age of 60 years. We have also provided the age wise distribution of population percentage in all the five districts of Meghalaya (Table - 1.5), which records maximum percentage of persons above 60 years from West Garo Hills District (4.72%), the minimum such a figure of 3.78 per cent from the East Garo Hills District in 1981 and 4.41 per cent from the East Khasi Hills District.

**Table - 1.4**

**Age and Sex Distribution of Population in Meghalaya, 1981.**

Age Group	Males		Females		Total Population	
	Nos.	Per cent	Nos.	Per cent	Nos.	Per cent
0- 4	98498	7.37	98055	7.34	196553	14.71
5- 9	96454	7.22	95125	7.12	191579	14.34
10-14	90902	6.80	87750	6.56	178652	13.36
15-19	71137	5.32	69510	5.20	140647	10.52
20-24	53342	3.99	59821	4.47	113163	8.46
25-29	52981	3.90	58644	4.39	111625	8.29
30-34	44501	3.33	39586	2.96	84087	6.29
35-59	143183	10.07	116296	8.70	259479	18.77
60 +	32261	2.41	26909	2.01	59170	4.42
All Ages	683710	49.41	652109	48.75	1335815	99.16

Source : Census of India, 1981, Meghalaya, Series - 1 (Social and Cultural Tables), Part IV (A), Page - 856.

**Table - 1.5**

**Age and District-Wise Population Distribution in Meghalaya 1981.**

Age Group	Meghalaya	Jaintia Hills	E. K. Hills	W. K. Hills	E. G. Hills	W. G. Hills
0- 4	14.77	16.12	14.05	16.29	15.38	14.01
5- 9	15.34	14.71	13.64	15.38	14.42	14.68
10-14	13.87	14.15	13.22	14.86	12.77	12.82
15-19	10.53	10.91	10.69	10.37	10.57	10.19
20-24	8.47	8.55	9.25	8.17	7.67	7.75
25-29	8.36	7.25	8.36	7.69	9.31	8.75
30-34	6.29	5.61	6.40	5.45	6.67	6.67
35-39	6.09	5.38	6.11	5.59	6.69	6.34
40-44	4.54	4.11	4.68	4.00	4.56	4.79
45-49	3.87	3.62	4.00	3.51	3.74	4.01
50-54	3.13	2.98	3.18	2.74	2.86	3.39
55-59	1.78	1.78	1.94	1.74	1.44	1.72
60 +	4.43	4.69	4.41	4.13	3.78	4.72



The decadal sex ratio has declined between 1901 to 1981 from 1037 females per thousand males to 954 and still further to 947 in 1991. The following table (No. 1.6) displays that while the rural sex ratio has declined in favour of males, the urban sex-ratio has shown a tendency of increase in favour of the female:

Table - 1.6

Decadal Variation of Sex Ratio in Meghalaya

Years	Total	Rural	Urban
1901	1036	1047	725
1911	1013	1024	757
1921	1000	1009	809
1931	971	989	697
1941	966	991	683
1951	949	969	784
1961	937	971	764
1971	942	958	853
1981	954	965	904
1991	947	-	-

**The Khasis:**

State of Meghalaya is the home of the Khasis, one of the most vibrant matrilineal communities in India. The matriarch at the family level is the source of reverence. As a whole, the senior citizens (*reiw tymmen*) are respected and their advice (*ki ktien jing sngeng tymmen*) is always honoured. By traditions, it is a status conscious community in which Syiem, Lyngdohs, Pators, Sardars, and other male village functionaries play significant roles. But it goes without saying that the Khasi world provides submerged identity to its male members. The point was noted quite early in the century by an etographer (Gurdon, P.R.T., 1990:76). He found the house-holds full of mothers, grand-mothers, children and grand children in the day, but the husbands of the married daughters were not to be found. Incidentally, the old husband of the family is the only person, who does not belong to the clan and for the Khasis clan solidarity is one of the significant considerations.

**Women : The Article of Reverence and Fear:**

Incidentally there are not many Khasi myths and legends associated with the old people. In search of such a source of symbolic significance we come across the myth of the gray hag. It goes like this : *U Ni Ba* lived together with his mother and uncles. His uncles decided to perform usual ceremonies and hold a customary feast, when his mother died. They learnt that *Ka Ben Bthug* (the Gray hag) had two fat

pigs required for the feast. The two pigs, faced East and West, were fed on human flesh. The uncles were tricked by the **Ka Ben Bthug** into the pigstea and were eaten up by the pigs. When his two uncles failed to return, **U Ni Ba** decided to look for them. He reached the **Ka Ben Bthuh's** pigstea, where he was welcomed by the host with an exclamation: "Why do you not look more closely to the pan?" He suggested, "I shall", but as she came near him, he turned suddenly and threw her to the pigs and, thus, the gray hag died. Thereafter, **U Ni Ba** slew the pigs, collected the the bones of his uncles and brought his provisions home for preparation of the feast in honour of his mother". (Simon, I.M., 1966:34-35). The myth of the gray hag symbolizes the enchantment of the women and predicament of the men among the Khasis. ✓

### Strategy for Data Collection

Meghalaya, with its 1.8 million population of which about 80 per cent are tribals living in 4,092 villages and 7 towns, has 4.43 per cent of its population of 60 years and above. Thus, we decided to draw our sample from both rural and urban areas. Considering the size of Shillong as the most significant urban agglomerate of the state, we decided to select Shillong as one of the units of our study. However, keeping in mind ethnic composition of the town, we decided to select a mixed locality (Laitumkhrah) and a predominantly tribal (Mawkhar-Jaiaw) locality from the town. Again from logistic point of view, we had to select villages large enough to provide us sufficient number of respondents. Even then, we had to go to 4 villages: Mawpat, Umpling, Nongrah, and Nongmynsong. As there is only one small old age home in the state located at Shillong known as Mercy Home, we decided to include it within our sample. In this way, we selected the following units of our study:

Unit of study	Size of the respondents
<b>A. Rural</b>	
1. Mawpat	52
2. Umpling	45
3. Nongrah	99
4. Nongmynsong	80
<b>B. Urban</b>	
5. Mawkhar	75
6. Jaiaw	75
7. Laitumukhrah	149
8. Nongthymmai (Mercy Home)	54
Total	629

So far the research tools (given in appendix) were



concerned, we did not feel the need to introduce a change in them. However, we did include two questions (nos. 47 and 48) in the questionnaire for the non-institutional respondents.

Four rural units, located in North-East of Shillong within a distance of 15 km., fall broadly within the immediate hinter land of the town. Among the basic infrastructure all of them have primary and middle schools, electricity, connection with metalled road and bus service to and from the town and with exception of one, none of them have a post office. Two of them have potable water supply and none of them have a branch of a commercial bank and a primary health unit within the village. From demographic points of view, while Nongmynsong has the smallest number of households (250), Umpling possesses the largest number (370) out of the four (Table - 1.7) villages under study.

Table - 1.7

**Infra-Structural Facilities at the Selected Villages Under Study**

Sl. No.	Facilities	Mawpat	Nongrah	Nongmynsong	Umpling
1.	No. of Households	297	260	250	370
2.	Primary School	2	3	2	1
3.	Middle School	1	-	1	1
4.	Health centre	No	No	No	No
5.	Portable Water Supply	No	No	Yes	Yes
6.	Post Office	Yes	No	No	No
7.	Bank	No	No	No	No
8.	Metal Road	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9.	Bus Service	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10.	Electric Supply	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Time Schedule for the Study**

The survey work started in the month of February 1991 and collection of data was completed by July 1991. The major part of the second of the year 1991 was spent in tabulation of the data. The report was delayed because of late receipt of the second instalment of the project money from New Delhi.

To begin with we always approach the village authorities (**Durbar Shnong**), explain our intention, sought the co-operation to interview the respondents and requested for the data on the villages. We were always welcome, provided with the official statistics on the villages and given time by the Headman to accompany the researchers to the respondents. Except in one case (**Laitumukhrah**), there

was no problem. However, in Laitumkhrah, we found the Durbar reluctant to permit us to conduct the research. We patiently explained to them our intention times and again and sought their co-operation. At last the Project Director had to approach the Headman and then He introduced us to the local opinion leaders and officials, who helped us to introduce the research team to the respondents.

We approached the respondents with a copy of the questionnaire and desired to interview them. Invariably, questionnaires were kept and we were promised a filled in one on our next appointed visit. Frequently, we could collect the completed questionnaires, but not infrequently, we were refused and questionnaires were returned unanswered. many times the questionnaires were lost by the respondents. At times, we were told that the respondents were out of station, hospitalized or simply unwilling to talk to us. Occasionally, we found the respondents reluctant, vague and unaware of the right answers. The researchers had to be patients and perseverent and not infrequently had to sit down even with well-educated respondents to complete the questionnaires. There were occasions, when the elderly respondents opened up, they went on and on for hours in their repetitive answers and it was impolite to inform them accordingly. This survey provides the expanse of the problem and not the depth, as that requires intensive micro-study. In this way this study provides an extensive view to the problem of ageing in Meghalaya, but its intensity will remain to be studied in future.



## 2. PERSONAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDANTS

Ideally, we fixed up a target of 600 individuals to be surveyed from rural and urban locations. We have informed above that we had selected four big villages, a compact tribal settlement in the urban setting, Mawkhar and Jaiaw, a mixed ethnic urban ward (Laitumukhrah), besides an institution (Mercy Home at Nongthymmai), run for the welfare of the elderly persons. In a way, we contacted the respondents of both the sexes at their rural and urban locations (Table - 2.1). The over-all sex-ratio is in favour of the female, as they constituted about 60 per cent, while the males were still above 40 per cent of the total sample. About 45 per cent of them were located in the villages and 56 per cent were found in the urban areas. The mixed ethnic ward and compact tribal ward in the urban agglomerate did

Table - 2.1

### Respondants Locale and Sex

Unit of Study	Male		Female		Total	
	Nos.	Per cent	Nos.	Per cent	Nos.	Per cent
<b>A. Rural</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>17.78</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>26.05</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>44.85</b>
1. Mawpat	20	3.17	32	5.08	52	8.26
2. Nongrah	34	5.40	65	10.33	99	15.73
3. Nongmyn-song	37	5.88	43	6.83	80	12.71
4. Umpling	21	3.33	24	3.81	45	9.15
<b>B. Urban</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>22.88</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>33.21</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>56.10</b>
5. Jaiaw-Mawkhar	55	8.74	95	15.10	150	23.84
6. Laitum-khrah	56	8.90	93	14.78	149	23.69
7. Nongthymmai (Mercy Home)	33	5.29	21	3.33	54	8.59
	<b>356</b>	<b>40.66</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>59.56</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>100.95</b>

not find any distinction on the basis of sex. The only unit of our study, which reported a higher male (5.24% male against 3.33% female) percentage, was that of the old age Home at Nongthymmai known as the Mercy Home. 99.8 per cent rural, 92.06 per cent urban and an over-all 94.8 per cent respondents were scheduled tribes. Better than 80 per cent

spoke Khasi, 3.5 per cent had Jaintia (Pnar) as their mother tongue and about 5.9 per cent of the respondents spoke Bengali.

### Age and Sex

About three-fourth of the senior citizens (75.83%) fall between 60 and 70 years of age. Among them males were less than half of the females (21.38% males against 45.07% females) and out of about 40 per cent of the total of this category, 17.48 per cent were males and 22.12 per cent were females in the age group of 61 to 65 years of age. 13.90 per cent males and 22.95 per cent females were aged between 66 to 70 years. As much as 17 per cent respondents (7.05% males and 9.95% females) belonged to age group of 71 to 80 years of age (Table - 2.2). In the age group of 81 years and above, there were about 5 per cent senior citizens (1.2% males and 3.75% females).

Table - 2.2

#### Age and Sex Distribution of Respondants

Age Group (years)	Male		Female		Total	
	Nos.	Per cent	Nos.	Per cent	Nos.	Per cent
61-65	110	17.48	140	22.12	249	39.34
66-70	88	13.90	144	22.95	231	36.49
71-75	31	4.65	39	6.20	70	10.84
77-80	16	2.40	24	3.75	40	6.34
80 +	8	1.20	24	3.75	32	5.10
No Res- ponse	1	0.15	4	0.60	5	0.75
	254	39.78	375	59.37	629	99.27

### Marital Status and Age

As much as about one-third of the respondents (32.64%) were aged between 61 to 65 years. 27.62 per cent of them were married, 3.26 per cent were widowed, and 2.86 per cent among them were unmarried. In the next age group (between 66 to 70 years), there were 36.88 per cent respondents. About 20 per cent of them (7%) were married, 12.64 per cent widowed, 2.20 per cent were still unmarried, 1.42 per cent were separated and less than one per cent from among them were deserted or had remarried or divorced (Table - 2.3). About one-tenth of the total (11.26%) belonged to 71 to 75



years of age and bulk of them either married (4.76%) or widowed (4.61%). Similarly, about six per cent (6.2%) respondents fall in the age group of 76 to 80 years and most of them were either married (3.02%) or widowed (2.71%). Eighty years and above aged individuals were about 5 per cent and most of them (3.17%) were widowed and some were still married (1.30%).

**Table - 2.3**  
**Respondants Age and Marital Status**

Marital Status	Age Group in Years						Total	
	61-65	66-70	71-75	76-80	81 +	No Resp.		
	%	%	%	%	%	No.	No.	%
Married	27.62	19.07	4.79	3.02	1.35	3	351	55.80
Unmarried	2.86	2.20	0.75	0.15	0.15	1	40	6.34
Divorced	0.15	0.60	0.30	0.15	-	-	8	1.20
Widowed	8.26	12.64	4.61	2.71	3.17	2	201	31.95
Separated	0.64	1.42	0.30	-	0.30	-	17	2.70
Deserted	-	0.15	0.15	-	0.15	-	3	0.45
Remarried	-	0.30	-	-	-	-	2	0.30
No Response	0.15	0.30	0.45	-	0.15	-	7	1.05
Total	32.64	36.68	11.26	6.20	5.27	6	629	99.79

### Religious Affiliation

About ninety per cent (89.78%) respondents (males 34.91% and females 54.87%) residing in rural (41.70%) and urban (47.08%) areas were Christians (Table-2.4). It is apparent that Christianity is more among the urban compared to rural and among the females compared to the males. All the Hindus were in urban area (in only one mixed ethnic locality) and their percentage was 4.34 (3.14% males and 1.2% females). Among the others (5.37%), are are a couple of Muslims, Budhists and it is also a predominantly tribal religious category, as it contained the followers of the indigenous faiths. However, the data confirm that urban centres are more religiously heterogenous than the predominantly tribal and Christian villages.

### Age and Educational Achievements

As much as 40 per cent respondents were illiterate. Among the rest 16.27 per cent were just literate, about 10

per cent each had passed middle school (9.95%) and matriculation (9.48%). About 5.37 per cent of them had intermediate degrees and as much as 12.32 per cent were graduates (Table-2.5). There were very few, who had technical and post-graduate degrees. Out of the total illiterates of 40.76 per cent, about 15 per cent each belonged to 61 to 65 years and 66 to 70 years of age-group. Bulk of the literates (16.27%) also belonged to these two above age-groups (9.58% and 6.32%). Similarly, most of the middle school passed, matriculate, intermediate and graduates also belonged to these two age-groups.

**Table - 2.4**

**Religious Affiliation of the Respondants**  
(in per cent)

Units of Study	Christianity		Hinduism		Other		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Rural	15.95	25.75	-	-	0.90	0.45	16.85	26.20
Urban	18.96	28.16	3.16	1.20	0.75	3.46	22.87	32.78
Total	34.91	53.89	3.16	1.20	1.65	3.91	39.72	58.98
	88.80		4.36		4.56		98.70	

**Table - 2.5**

**Age and Educational Achievements of the Respondants**  
(in per cent)

Educational	Age in Years					No Re- sponse	Total
	61-65	66-70	71-75	76-80	81 +		
1. Illiterate	14.69	14.06	4.26	3.95	3.63	0.15	40.76
2. Literate	9.58	6.32	1.12	1.12	0.15	-	16.27
3. Middle School	3.63	4.10	1.27	0.60	0.30	-	9.95
4. Matriculate	4.10	3.63	0.90	0.15	0.60	-	9.48
5. Inter- mediate	2.21	2.05	0.75	0.15	0.15	-	5.37
6. Graduates	4.58	4.42	2.37	0.60	0.60	0.15	12.32
7. Others	0.45	0.45	-	-	-	-	0.94
8. No Response	2.55	8.15	0.15	0.15	-	0.15	4.26
Total	41.89	36.30	10.82	6.72	4.98	0.45	99.35



## Education and Sex

As much as 42.5 per cent respondents (12.48% males 16.27%), about one-third (5.05%) were males and 11.21 per cent were females. About 3.47 per cent males 6.32 per cent females had formal schooling (Table-2.6). Similarly, 2.84 per cent males and 3.97 per cent females had passed matriculation. Almost same percentage (2.55% males and 2.84% females) had intermediate degrees. However, male graduates (8.54%) were more than the female graduates (3.79%). All the post-graduate and technical degrees (6.94%) were claimed by the males. In terms of ratio, these were more illiterates among the females and these were larger male members in higher educational categories. Illiterates (Table-2.7) had no occupation (13.74%), were labourers (7.41%) and cultivator (6.95%) and engaged in business (4.20%). More than one-third (5.67% out of 15.8%) and one-fifth of the literates (3.5%) had either no occupation or were 5 years in

private business. 4.9 per cent or half of the matriculates had no occupation and as much as 2 per cent out of 9.8 per cent of the matriculates were engaged in business. Even among the graduates (12.16%), more than half of them (7.45%) had no occupation. As they had degrees 2.10 per cent were in the Government service and 2.37 per cent were engaged in private business. As much as 39.65 per cent reported to have no occupation. These were hardly any (0.34%) professionals out of 629 respondents.

Table - 2.6

### Sex and Educational Achievements (in per cent)

Educational	Male	Female	Total
1. Illiterate	12.48	30.02	42.50
2. Literate	5.05	11.21	16.26
3. Middle School	3.47	6.32	9.79
4. Matriculation	2.84	3.79	6.63
5. Intermediate	2.55	2.84	5.37
6. Graduation	8.58	3.79	12.32
7. Others	0.94	-	0.94
8. No Response	2.84	1.26	4.10
Total	40.44	54.23	97.31

Table - 2.7

### Education and Occupational Background of the Respondants (in per cent)

Occupations	Educational Background								Total
	Illiterate	Lite rate	Middle School	Matri- culate	Inter- mediate	Grad- uate	Other	NR	
Cultivation	6.95	0.64	-	0.15	0.15	-	-	0.45	8.37
Govt. Service	-	1.05	0.34	1.58	1.10	2.10	0.15	0.34	8.21
Pvt. Service	-	0.34	0.34	-	-	0.15	-	-	0.79
Business	4.26	3.50	1.58	2.10	0.63	2.37	-	0.46	14.85
Professionals	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.34	-	0.34
Labourer	7.41	1.42	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.00
Others	3.79	2.52	1.10	0.95	0.80	0.15	-	-	9.31
No Occupation	13.74	5.67	4.10	4.89	2.84	7.42	0.46	0.46	39.65
No Response	4.58	0.34	0.95	0.15	-	-	-	2.52	8.54
	40.73	15.80	9.85	9.80	5.53	12.16	0.95	4.75	99.36

To sum up, over 95 per cent respondents were scheduled tribes, 90 per cent spoke Khasi and follow Christianity as their religion. 86.67 per cent of them belonged to 60 to 75 years of age and about 88 per cent of them were either married (55.80%) or widowed (31.95%). The females were three to two males in the ratio, and every two out of the five respondents was illiterate.



## 2. FAMILY BACKGROUND

About half of the respondents (38.07% + 11.85%) either did not reply or had relevance to the question on family occupation and income. About one-eighth (11.37%) belong labourers and one-sixteenth (6.95%) to the cultivators' family and incidentally as much as 18.96 per cent respondents' family income was less than Rs. 1000/- per mensem mostly cultivators (3.95%), labourers (6.16%) and business men (3%). About one-sixth of the respondents (16.59%) claimed to have a monthly income at between Rs. 1001/- to Rs. 2000/-. In this category more than half of the Government servants fall (3.47% out of 6.16%), besides the business men (3.16%), 0.6 per cent or 4 out of 629 respondents claimed to have an earning of more than Rs. 5000/- to Rs. 6000/- a month and all of them belonged to business men's family. Only two respondents one each as a cultivator and another without an apparent occupation informed a monthly income of more than Rs. 6001/- (Table-3.1).

We enquired about respondents' past occupation. As much as 52.61 per cent did not reply and in case of about one-third of them (30.13%), the question was not applicable. Most of the occupational changes (16.02%) occurred at the lower income groups i.e. upto Rs. 2000/- per month level. Their past occupations were unskilled labour (3.65%), cultivation (1.74%) and business.

There was no significant difference between rural and urban respondents in terms of their residence. While 43.39 per cent rural and 41.39 per cent urban respondents resided with their families, 8.52 per cent urban against 1.91 per cent rural respondents did not do so (Table-3.2).

We enquired of the respondents' relationship with the heads of their families. Out of the total residents of Mercy Home, the Old Age Home, and the respondents of Nongmynsong village were not included for the analysis. As much as one-third of the respondents (31.59%) did not respond to the query. About one-tenth of them (4% + 6.4%) had either their husbands or wives as the heads of their families. About 5 per cent of them (2.67% + 2.13%) were either brothers or sisters. More than 40 per cent heads of the families were sons (17.84%) and daughters (24.92%). Some of them (8.36%) had their relatives as their heads of the families. Only 7.47 per cent heads of the families were in the age group of 60 years and above (Table-3.3) and more than 40 per cent (27.67 + 13.57) heads of the families were below 30 years of age.

While about thirty per cent (7.92 + 24.20) heads did not respond to the question on education, 9.43 per cent were illiterates (Table-3.4). One-sixth of them (16.02%) were literates and about one-fourth of them were middle school

## Respondants' Residence with their Families

S. No.	Location	Yes		No		NR		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Rural	249	43.30	11	1.91	16	2.78	276	48.00
2.	Urban	238	41.39	49	8.52	12	2.08	299	52.00
Total		487	84.69	60	10.43	28	4.36	575	100.00

While one-sixth (16.2%) had no income as most of these category of people had no occupation, 40.49 per cent of the household heads did not provide response on the income. More than one-fourths of them (16.37% + 10.5%) had a monthly income, which was less than Rs. 2000. About 15 per cent of them had their incomes between Rs. 2001 to Rs. 5000 a month and hardly a few (0.52%) had the higher income above Rs. 5000 (Table-3.6) per month.

Table - 3.3

### Age and Types of Heads of the Respondants Families

Age Group	Relationship (in per cent)										NR	Total
	Father	Mother	Husband	Wife	Brother	Sister	Son	Daughter	Relative			
< 26	-	-	-	-	0.09	0.36	1.38	7.55	2.67	9.61		27.67
26-30	-	-	-	0.09	-	-	1.95	6.14	1.14	4.38		13.57
31-35	-	0.09	0.26	0.09	-	-	2.40	2.22	1.24	2.58		8.92
36-40	-	-	0.26	0.35	0.09	0.35	3.20	4.18	0.89	2.49		11.82
41-45	0.89	-	0.26	0.62	-	0.26	1.95	2.75	0.97	0.47		6.85
46-50	-	-	1.17	1.24	0.26	0.17	0.53	1.15	0.53	0.09		5.07
51-55	-	-	0.44	0.35	1.33	0.17	0.26	0.26	0.17	0.09		3.38
56-60	-	-	0.53	1.24	0.89	0.17	-	0.09	0.09	0.09		4.09
61+	0.53	0.53	2.31	0.26	-	0.70	-	0.17	0.35	0.09		7.74
N. A.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.09	9.52		9.61
N. R.	-	-	0.09	0.09	-	-	0.09	0.35	0.17	0.09		0.89
Total	0.17	0.62	4.00	6.40	2.67	2.13	17.84	24.92	8.36	31.59		100.00



Table - 3.4

## Educational Background and Relations of Respondants' Family Heads

Edu- cation	Relationship (in per cent)										NA	NR	Total
	Father	Mother	Hus- band	Wife	Bro- ther	Sis- ter	Son	Dau- ghter	Rela- tive				
Illite- rate	0.17	0.26	0.80	1.95	-	0.17	1.69	1.42	0.52	-	2.40	9.4	
Lite- rate	-	-	0.71	1.15	-	0.26	3.11	4.71	2.30	-	3.72	10.0	
Middle	-	-	0.53	1.06	0.09	0.09	2.12	2.75	0.97	-	0.96	12.6	
Matri- culat	-	-	0.53	1.51	-	0.34	1.86	2.58	1.06	-	4.96	13.9	
Inter- mediate	-	-	0.62	0.70	-	0.26	2.12	2.58	0.80	-	3.02	10.1	
Gradu- ate	-	0.09	1.06	0.62	0.26	0.53	4.62	5.60	1.95	-	2.93	17.7	
Others	-	0.26	0.09	-	0.09	-	1.06	1.51	0.89	-	0.17	4.2	
N. A.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.09	0.17	7.92	-	7.9	
N. R.	-	-	0.09	1.86	0.26	0.44	1.15	2.48	0.70	-	1.95	9.0	
Total	0.17	0.80	4.80	8.92	0.70	2.12	17.84	23.76	9.25	7.92	24.2	100	

Table - 3.5

## Occupations of the Respondants' Heads of the Families

Occupation	Relationship (in per cent)											Total
	F.	M.	Husband	Wife	Brother	Sister	Son	Daughter	Relative	NA	NR	
Cultivation	0.17	-	0.17	0.52	-	0.09	0.71	1.66	-	-	0.71	4.00
Govt. Service	-	0.09	0.62	1.24	0.45	0.52	5.87	5.16	3.38	-	4.14	21.40
Pvt. Service	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.09	0.09	-	-	1.15	1.32
Business	-	-	1.42	0.52	-	0.17	1.15	1.15	0.71	-	0.52	2.40
Profession	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.09	0.45	0.09	-	-	7.82
Labour	-	0.09	0.53	1.09	0.17	0.09	2.30	2.58	4.48	-	3.82	12.33
Others	-	-	0.45	0.45	-	0.09	1.51	3.72	0.89	-	5.42	12.54
None	-	0.34	1.15	4.71	-	0.71	3.58	6.76	4.52	-	1.32	19.24
N. A.	-	-	0.09	-	0.09	-	0.25	-	0.17	7.9	0.99	8.00
N. R.	-	0.34	0.09	0.89	-	0.80	0.89	2.67	2.30	-	6.85	14.59
Total	0.17	0.62	4.54	9.25	0.71	2.48	12.90	24.20	10.60	7.9	24.11	97.50



Table - 3.6

## Respondants' Family Heads' Income

Relationship (%)	Income (in Rs.)							N. A.	N.R.	Total
	<1000	1001-2000	2001-3000	3001-4000	4001-5000	5001-6000	6001 +			
Father	0.089	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.089	-	0.17
Mother	0.089	-	0.089	-	-	-	-	0.26	0.089	0.52
Husband	11.97	1.24	0.53	0.26	0.62	0.089	-	0.45	0.17	4.21
Wife	3.20	1.15	0.34	0.089	0.089	-	-	3.20	1.24	9.84
Brother	0.089	0.089	0.17	0.089	0.089	-	-	0.089	0.089	0.70
Sister	0.45	-	0.53	0.26	-	-	-	0.34	0.17	1.78
Son	4.53	2.04	3.01	1.42	0.45	0.089	-	3.90	2.13	17.17
Daughter	3.47	3.47	4.26	1.95	0.45	0.089	-	4.60	3.29	21.6
Relatives	1.69	1.51	1.15	1.06	0.17	0.17	-	0.97	1.15	7.91
N. A.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.71	7.38	12.09
N. R.	1.78	0.77	0.45	0.089	-	-	0.089	21.27	0.70	16.20
Total	16.37	10.50	10.05	4.36	1.06	0.53	0.089	40.49	16.20	99.6

The most significant relationship the rural respondents had with their respective heads of the families was that of being mother (12.17%) followed by fatherhood (8.34%). However, such relationships were entirely missing from the urban locations. As much as two-thirds (42.60% urban and 25.56% rural) respondents chose not to respond this query. Only 3.11 per cent respondents were staying with the families other than their own. These 25 respondents out of a total of 575 non-institutional senior citizens could not articulate their reasons for their stay at the places they were located.

To sum up, 84.60 per cent respondents resided with their families; 50 per cent households were headed either by daughters, or sons, or wives or husbands of the respondents. The females (daughters or wives) headed about one-third of such households. The heads of the family were mainly cultivators, labourers or petty Government servants in that order and more than one-fourth of the families had a monthly income of Rs. 2000.

#### 4. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The respondents were asked in case they were not working whether they would like to take up some work. Only 4.42 per cent urban and 3.06 per cent rural senior citizens desired to work on some job (Table-4.1). While 22.14 per cent were incapable of taking up any work because of their physical limitations, 21.93 per cent did not respond to their question. Half of the total (31.47% urban and 18.53% rural) were not willing to take a job. 44 out of 575 respondents who desired to take up jobs were incoherent about the reasons for doing so with exception of those who wanted to do so because of poverty.

Table - 4.1

##### Respondants' Preference for Jobs

Location	No		Yes		NA		NR		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Urban	181	31.47	26	4.42	103	17.51	9	1.53	299	52.00
Rural	109	18.53	18	3.06	28	4.93	120	20.04	276	48.00

We enquired of the respondents whether they possessed any property of their own. Only an insignificant number of them (1.2%) gave no answers. About one-fourth of the total (24.04%) from the urban areas reported in the negative, while 23 per cent of the same location had their own properties. In the rural areas more respondents owned properties (28.71%) than those who did not (22.31%). Asked of the details of the ownership, about one-fourth of them (24.06%) did not respond. About one-sixth of the total (16.12%) had house and land both, and one-eighth each of them reported to have landed property (12.8%) and houses (13.90%). So far the monetary values are concerned, 27.01 per cent of them reported that they owned properties worth Rs. 90,000 and above.

On retirement benefits and their investment only 14.18 per cent respondents, and predominantly urban (12.45%), reported to have received gratuity, provident fund etc. Five ruralites (0.79%) received the amount of such money upto Rs. 25,000 on the eve of their retirement. About 1/10th of the total (10.86%) urban senior citizens received the retirement benefits ranging from Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 1,00,000 and above. More than one-third of these privileged citizens (3.79%) got the amount upto Rs. 25,000, 3.16 per cent got it between Rs. 25,001 to Rs. 50,000, 2.37 per cent received the benefit



between Rs. 50,001 to Rs. 75,000, 1.42 per cent got the amount upto one lakh and a single individual reported to have received the retirement benefits better than Rs. 100000

Table - 4.2

**Nature and Worth of Respondants' Property**  
(in per cent)

Monetary Value of Property (Rs.)	House	Land	Land House	Other	NR	NA	Total
10,000-30,000	1.12	2.37	0.94	-	0.45	-	4.95
30,001-50,000	0.75	0.94	1.50	-	-	-	3.63
50,001-70,000	0.31	0.64	1.20	-	0.15	-	2.95
70,001-90,000	0.75	1.42	2.40	0.15	0.15	-	5.10
90,001 +	9.93	6.43	8.85	0.45	0.75	-	27.01
N. R.	0.94	0.94	0.31	-	20.55	-	24.06
N. A.	-	-	-	-	8.25	24.06	32.66
Total	13.90	12.80	16.12	0.60	31.91	29.06	100.00

Just 54 of the total respondants (8.53%) reported to have made investments of their retirement benefits. Most of them (4.42%) invested between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 30,000, 1.89 per cent each upto Rs. 50,000 and upto Rs. 90,000 and above and 1.55 per cent of them put their savings upto Rs. 70,000 in some economic investments. 36 of the senior citizens (5.68%) reported to have gifted away their savings ranging between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 30,000 (2.05%), Rs. 30,001 to Rs. 50,000 (1.1%), Rs. 50,001 to Rs. 70,000 (0.95%) and Rs. 90,000 and above (1.55%).

As much as 20.23 per cent of the respondants reported to operate a saving bank account in banks. Only 8.67 per cent could provide us with details of the approximate balance in their respective accounts (Table-4.3), among them 5.53 per cent were males and 3.1 per cent were females. About 40 per cent savings (3.63% of the total) in the bank accounts were upto Rs. 10,000. Eight (1.26%) senior citizens

reported to have approximate balance in their accounts Rs. 90,001 and above.

**Table - 4.3**

**Respondants Bank Balance**

Amount (Rs.)	Male		Female		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Upto Rs. 10,000	18	2.84	5	0.79	23	3.63
10,000-30,000	5	0.79	8	1.26	13	2.05
30,001-50,000	5	0.79	3	0.47	8	1.26
50,001-70,000	-	-	1	0.15	1	0.15
70,001-90,000	1	0.15	-	-	1	0.15
90,001 and Above	6	0.95	2	0.31	8	1.26
No Response	32	5.05	57	9.00	96	14.05
N. A.	179	28.28	299	47.24	478	75.52
Total	256	38.85	373	59.22	629	98.17

**Income and Its Sources**

Only about 30 per cent (29.86%) respondents reported to have a regular monthly income ranging from less than Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 5,001 and above (Table-4.4). About one-ninth (13.58%) had a monthly income only upto Rs. 1,000 from all the sources, about one-tenth of them (10.27%) between Rs. 1,001 to Rs. 2,000, only 3.31 per cent had between Rs. 2,001 to Rs. 3,000 and 9.21 per cent had an income above Rs. 5,001. Pension was the major sources of income upto 9.53 per cent of the respondents ranging from an income of less than Rs. 1,000 (3%) to Rs. 5,001 and above (0.60%). The respondents drew from various occupations 6.92 per cent, from investment (2.52%), bank interest (3.60%), from their children and grand children, etc. (2.52%) and other sources (5.37%) the income ranging from less than a thousand to more than Rs. 5,000 a month.



Table - 4.4

**Sources and Amount of Income**  
(in per cent)

Income (in Rs.)	Occupation	Pension	From Children Grand Children	Investment	Bank Interests	Other Source	Total
< 1,000	2.31	3.00	2.21	1.20	1.57	3.15	13.58
1,001- 2000	3.00	4.42	1.80	0.15	0.15	0.60	10.27
2,001- 3,000	0.45	0.94	0.45	-	0.45	2.30	3.31
3,001- 4,000	0.15	0.45	0.15	-	-	0.15	0.94
4,001- 5,000	0.31	0.31	0.30	-	0.15	0.15	1.26
5,001 +	0.60	4.60	0.45	1.05	1.42	0.94	5.21
Total	6.92	9.79	5.53	2.52	3.60	5.37	29.00

**Expenses**

About 15.05 per cent rural and 16.95 per cent urban respondents claimed to contribute to the household for their maintenance ranging from less than rupees one thousand to Rs. 4,000 a month. Only slightly above one-fourth of the respondents (26.54%) gave details of their contributions to the household for their up-keep (Table-4.5). Among bulk of them (10.55% males and 13.06% females) paid the amount from less than a thousand to Rs. 2,000 a month and only 11 of them (1.73%) could contribute between Rs. 2,001 to Rs. 4,000 a month to the households.

The respondents were requested to inform of the approximate monthly expenditure on their food and whether they were satisfied with the food. About one-tenth of the respondents (9.16%) felt that the question was not applicable to them and more than one-fourth of them (26.86%) decided not to respond to the question (Table-4.6). 31.44 per cent female and 17.06 per cent male felt that about a thousand rupees were spent on their food. About one-tenth of the total (5.35% female and 3.47% males) spent about Rs. 2,000 on their food. About 5 per cent of the total (2.54% female and 2.37% males) contributed upto Rs. 3,000 on their food, while less than one per cent spent more than Rs. 3,001

on this item. About one-fourth of the respondents (24.17%) did not respond to the question on their satisfaction with the type of food they were served. More than two-thirds of them (70.78%) were satisfied with the food (Table-4.7), as much as 25.28 per cent from 61 to 65 years of age and 28.59 per cent from 66 to 70 years of age felt so.

Inmates of the Mercy Home (54 in number) could not respond on the question on monthly expenditure on clothing. For the rest, more than one-third (37.54%) of them (12.97% males and 24.56% females) reported to be spending upto Rs. 1,00 a month on clothing. About 14.18 per cent (4.15% males and 10.03% females) claimed to be spending upto Rs. 5,00 a

**Table - 4.5**

**Respondants' Monthly Contributions to the Households for their Up-Keep**

(in per cent)

Amount (in Rs.)	Males		Females		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Upto 1000	44	6.95	74	11.69	118	18.84
1,001-2,000	24	3.60	15	2.37	39	6.81
2,001-3,000	4	0.60	3	0.45	7	1.05
3,001-4,000	1	0.15	3	0.45	4	0.60
4,001 +	-	-	-	-	-	-
N. A.	-	-	-	-	310	48.98
N. R.	-	-	-	-	151	23.85
Total	73	11.30	95	14.96	629	101.33

**Table - 4.6**

**Respondants' Monthly Expenditure on Food**

Amount (in Rs.)	Males		Females		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Upto 1000	108	17.06	199	31.44	307	48.50
1,001-2,000	22	3.47	34	5.35	56	8.84
2,001-3,000	15	2.37	17	2.54	32	5.05
3,001-4,000	3	0.47	1	0.17	4	0.63
4,001 +	-	-	-	-	-	-
N. A.	-	-	-	-	58	9.16
N. R.	-	-	-	-	170	26.86
Total					629	99.04



Table - 4.7

## Respondants' Satisfaction with the Food

Age Group	No		Yes		NR		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
61-65	19	3.00	160	25.28	71	11.21	250	39.50
66-70	6	0.94	181	28.59	43	6.79	230	36.34
71-75	3	0.47	58	9.16	9	1.42	70	11.04
76-80	-	-	30	4.74	12	1.88	42	6.66
81 & Above	-	-	15	3.00	12	1.88	31	4.88
N. R.	-	-	-	-	6	0.94	6	0.94
Total	28	4.42	448	70.78	153	24.17	629	99.36

month on clothing. 1.90 per cent each from both the sexes informed to be spending upto Rs. 1,000 a month on clothing. Two respondents each responded that they had been spending upto Rs. 2,000 and Rs. 2,001 and more a month on clothing (Table-4.8). As much as one-third of the respondents (33.38%) decided not to respond the query on the clothing, while 8.65 per cent felt that the question was not applicable to them.

Table - 4.8

## Respondants' Monthly Expenditure on Clothing

Amount (in Rs.)	Males		Females		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Upto 100	75	12.97	142	24.56	217	37.54
101-500	24	4.15	58	10.03	82	14.18
501-1,000	11	1.90	11	1.90	22	3.80
1,001-1,500	4	0.69	3	0.51	7	1.21
1,501-2,000	2	0.34	-	-	2	0.34
2,000 +	1	0.17	1	0.17	2	0.34
N. A.	19	3.28	31	5.38	50	8.65
N. R.	86	14.87	107	18.51	193	33.38
Total	222	38.40	353	61.06	575	100.00

About 15.56 per cent respondents (14.35% urban and 1.21% rural) realized that some of their needs could not be met for want of money. As much as one-fourth of them

(27.77%) did not respond this question. The follow-up question to the above query was: how much expenditure was involved on those items? About one-third respondents volunteered their answers. The amount of money varied from Rs. 100 (6.79%) to above Rs. 1,500 (15.48%). The items of expenditure were food (4.58%), medicine (32.05%), house maintenance (6.95%), land (7.42%), spectacles (0.17%), rituals (0.15%), clothes (0.47%), tobacco (0.17%), harmonium (0.17%) etc.

Table - 4.8

Respondants Needs Unfulfilled for Want of Money

Needs Felt	Amount Required					N. A.	N. R.	Total
	Upto 100	101- 500	501- 1000	1001- 1500	1500 +			
Delicious Food	4.89	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.89
Medical Care	1.80	0.17	-	-	-	-	-	2.05
Rituals	-	0.17	-	-	-	-	-	0.17
Clothes	0.34	0.17	-	-	-	-	-	0.91
House Maintenance	-	0.34	0.17	5.33	-	-	-	6.95
Land	-	0.17	7.17	0.17	-	-	-	7.44
Spectacles	-	-	0.17	-	-	-	-	0.17
Tobacco	-	-	0.17	-	-	-	-	0.17
Harmonium	-	-	0.17	-	-	-	-	0.17
Others	-	-	-	1.20	9.51	-	-	10.92
N. A.	-	-	-	-	-	42.73	25.25	25.25
Total	6.79	1.42	0.68	8.69	15.48	42.73	25.25	99.44

To sum up, about 40 per cent of respondents had landed property, house and house & land both. One out of every fourteenth respondent wanted to work for some earning. One-tenth of them got retirement benefits and 80 per cent of them made investments. About 20 per cent of the respondents operated a bank account with a saving balance upto Rs. 10,000. About 30 per cent respondents had a monthly income from Rs. 1,001 to Rs. 5,000, drawing from occupation, pension, bank interest, investments and contribution from the children. One-fourth of them contributed to the families for their up-keep ranging from Rs. 100 to Rs. 2,000 a month. About one-fifth of the respondents could not afford to have delicious food, medical care, house and land maintenance for want of money.



## 5. HOUSING

The predominantly rural houses were small, 'Kothi' or bungalow (29.92%), known as **Assam type of houses** (16.6%) made of timber, reed, mortar and tin. One-fourth of the urban houses (6.92% + 18.51%) were also of such construction. Though 2.76 per cent urban respondents claimed to live in **kuchcha** houses, but there were no **mud** houses in the hilly and rocky Meghalaya. Again 4 respondents (0.69%) reported to be residing in the flats, but multi-storey structure have not caught up in Shillong. The predominant feature of urban houses of the respondents was of mixed character (17.47%) consisting of **pukka** and **Assam** type of structures (Table-5.1).

About 30 per cent rural houses had 3 to 5 rooms and one-third (33.35%) urban houses in which the respondents lived had 4 to 8 rooms (Table-5.2). There were really very few one room houses (1.55%), but as much as 5.51 per cent respondents lived in large-bungalows with 10 rooms. Two-thirds of the respondents reported they had a room for themselves. About 15.05 per cent senior citizens shared their rooms with other members of the family and only 13.84 per cent of them from urban areas did not have their own rooms.

More than 90 per cent (41.17% rural & 50.68% urban) respondents had the electrical connection in their houses, while 6.4 per cent rural did not have it, 46.19 per cent

**Table - 5.1**

### Types of Respondants' Houses

Type of Houses	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Shanti/Jhuggi	-	-	11	1.90	11	1.90
Jhopri						
Kuchcha Houses	1	0.17	16	2.76	17	2.93
Kuchcha-Pukka	1	0.17	101	17.47	102	17.64
Mixed						
Flats	-	-	4	0.69	4	0.69
Small 'Kothi'	173	29.92	40	92	213	36.84
Bungalow						
Large 'Kothi'	1	0.17	13	24	14	2.41
Bungalow						
Any other	98	16.60	10	51	203	36.84
(Assam Type)						
No Response	4	0.69	7	1.21	11	1.90
Total	276	47.72	299	51.70	575	99.42

Table - 5.2

## Number of Rooms in the Houses Lived in by Respondants

Nos. of Rooms	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1. 1 Room	7	1.21	2	0.34	9	1.55
2. 2 Rooms	30	5.91	16	2.76	46	7.95
3. 3 Rooms	45	7.78	26	4.14	71	11.92
4. 4 Rooms	74	12.80	35	6.05	109	18.85
5. 5 Rooms	53	9.16	37	6.39	90	15.55
6. 6 Rooms	23	3.97	47	8.13	70	12.10
7. 7 Rooms	8	1.38	36	6.22	44	7.60
8. 8 Rooms	22	3.80	38	6.56	60	10.36
9. 9 Rooms	2	0.34	11	1.90	13	2.24
10. 10 Rooms	6	1.03	28	4.48	34	5.51
11. 10 Rooms +	-	-	2	0.34	2	0.34
12. N. R.	6	1.03	21	3.63	27	4.66
Total	276	47.72	299	51.70	575	99.63

urban and 3.59 per cent rural respondents had water connections in their houses and as much as half of the respondents (49.22%) reported that their houses did not have water connections. More than 30 per cent rural respondents (30.96%) still have dry service latrines, while 61.44 per cent urban houses had the water connections in their toilets (Table-5.3).

Table - 5.3 (a)

## Facilities in the Respondants' Toilet

Locations	No		Yes		NR		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
<b>A. Electric Connections</b>								
1. Rural	37	6.40	238	41.17	1	0.17	276	47.74
2. Urban	5	0.86	293	50.86	1	0.17	299	52.71
Total	42	7.26	531	71.85	2	0.34	575	99.45
<b>B. Water Connection (Tap Water)</b>								
1. Rural	260	44.38	15	2.59	1	0.17	276	47.74
2. Urban	28	4.84	267	46.19	4	0.69	299	52.71
Total	288	49.22	282	28.78	5	0.86	575	99.45



Table - 5.3 (b)

**Nature of the Toilet Facilities**  
(in per cent)

Location	Dry	Water	Another	N. R.	Total
1. Rural	15.22	28.71	3.63	0.17	47.74
2. Urban	15.74	33.73	0.17	2.07	51.72
Total	30.96	61.44	3.80	2.24	99.45

More than 80 per cent respondents lived in their own houses, more so in the case of the rural residents (44.34%) than that of the urban (37.71%). There were 13.32 per cent urban senior citizens in the rented accommodations, while 3.06 per cent rural respondents, mostly the labourers (2.48%), resided in the rented houses. At both the locales - urban and rural - there was no significant presence of Government accommodation even to its own employees (Table-5.4).

Table - 5.4

**Types of House - ownership**

Types of Houses	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1. Rented/Lease	18	3.06	77	13.32	95	16.43
2. Govt. Quarters	-	-	2	0.34	2	0.34
3. Owned	255	44.34	218	37.71	468	80.96
4. N. R.	3	0.51	2	0.34	5	0.86
Total	276	47.91	299	51.71	575	98.59

More than four-fifth houses (81.82%) were single storey. The multi-storey houses have appeared mostly in the urban areas, where our 14.01 per cent respondents resided. However, the affluent ruralites have started aping the urbanites in the house structures, as 2.24 per cent rural senior citizens lived in the multi-storey houses.

To sum up, 84.69 per cent respondents resided with their families. 50 of such households were headed by either daughters or sons, or wives or husbands of the respondents. About one-third of the households were headed by either the wives or daughters of the respondents, who were mainly cultivators, labourers or petty Government servants in that order and more than one-fourth of the households had a monthly income which was less than Rs. 2,000 per family.

## 6. HEALTH

Less than one-fifth (19.20%) urban and one-twentieth (4.67%) rural respondents used to go for evening or morning walks. It was essentially an immobile set of people at home, as 93.73 per cent of them (46.68% rural + 47.05% urban) respondents did not play any out-door games, and only 3.80 per cent occasionally and 2 individuals (0.34%) regularly out of 575 respondents played any out-door games.

Table - 6.1

### Food Items Served to the Respondants (in per cent)

Food Items	Rural			Urban		
	Yes	No	N.R.	Yes	No	N.R.
1. Roti	22.82	23.72	55.07	19.37	46.42	34.06
2. Paneer	11.59	21.37	66.30	2.00	58.11	39.74
3. Rice	99.63	-	0.34	97.86	0.66	1.33
4. Eggs	93.24	1.83	4.34	82.83	8.35	8.68
5. Milk	84.70	6.86	8.32	89.51	4.34	6.01
6. Dal	91.22	0.72	7.96	92.52	3.00	4.37
7. Vegetables	98.10	-	1.81	97.52	0.66	1.67
8. Meat	95.93	0.72	3.25	91.18	5.01	3.67
9. Fruits	85.79	0.72	13.39	86.17	3.67	10.00
10. Any Other	77.83	0.36	21.72	55.44	9.68	34.73

The above table (6.1) shows that rice, eggs, dal, vegetables and meat were eaten universally in rural and urban areas. Roti (Breads), Milk and Fruits, which had not been traditionally the food item of the tribesmen, were used by a relatively smaller percentage of respondents. Paneer appears to be a commodity, which was not in very much use. Table-6.2 shows that the lower income group (upto Rs. 2,000 a month family income) did not prefer roti and paneer. Rice, Dal, Eggs, and Meat were universally preferred food items for all the income groups. Milk, a relatively new entry in the tribal dietary system, had almost universal acceptance as an item of the food. Fruits, perhaps seasonal one, were also included in the dietary system in all the income groups. The respondents of the higher income group (above Rs. 5,000 a month) were rice, egg, milk, dal, vegetable, meat, and fruit eaters. Incidentally, our data did not show a striking disparity in food consumption on the basis of income.

Three-fourth (74.57%) rural respondents were satisfied with the quantity and quality of food served to them. Every



15th urbanite was dis-satisfied with the food, while 90 per cent had no complaint on the quantity and 81.16 per cent had no problem on the quality of food provided to them. Almost half of the rural (48.14%) and one-fourth of urban (25.38%) respondents were in the habit of chewing tobacco. More than 6 per cent rural and 18.03 per cent urban respondents smoked biri or cigarettes. 7.96 per cent rural and 3.34 per cent urbanites used both alcohol and smoking regularly and another 10 per cent of the total were addicted to smoking and tobacco chewing (Table-6.2). While 38.74 per cent respondents did not have the above three vices, as much as 6.51 per cent rural respondents were in habit of all the above vices. Arecca nuts, betel leaves and lime chewing (Kwai in Khasi) was the most common, a universal practice in Meghalaya.

### Physical Conditions

Vision of more than half of the respondents remained unchanged and it went down in 47.42 per cent in urban and 43.80 per cent among the rural respondents. In case of hearing 76.48 per cent urban and 72.40 per cent rural respondents did not feel the change. However, hearing faculty was impaired in case of 26.42 per cent rural and 20.70 urban respondents (Table-6.4). Sleep remain unaffected in the case of 79.82 per cent urban and 74.57 per cent rural respondents. About two-thirds of the respondents did not have ailments pertaining to bone joints. 68.05 per cent rural and 79.82 per cent urban respondents realized no change in their memory. Psycho motor faculties remained unchanged in case of 83.16 per cent urban and 72.03 per cent rural respondents and even bowel habits remained unchanged in case of 69.86 per cent rural and 76.15 urban respondents. The most common ailment were blood pressure (18.32% rural and 25.05% urban) and prolonged coughing (41.66% rural and 11.35% urban). Rest of the ailments such as diabetics, lever trouble, kidney and stroke were prevalent to the extent of less than 5 per cent of the respondents (Table-6.4).



Table - 8.2

**Respondants Income and the Food Items**  
(figures in bracket indicate per cent)

		Income (in Rs.)								
Food Type		<1000	1001-2000	2001-3000	3001-4000	4001-5000	5001-6000	6001 +	N. A.	Total
Roti	Y	42	46	11	4	4	-	2	33	9
		(6.63)	(7.26)	(1.73)	(0.63)	(0.63)	-	(0.31)	(5.21)	(1.42)
	N	61	80	28	18	11	4	1	160	115
Paneer	Y	14	22	3	1	3	-	2	23	16
		(2.21)	(3.47)	(0.47)	(0.15)	(0.15)	-	(0.31)	(3.63)	(2.52)
	N	89	104	36	21	12	4	1	170	108
Rice	Y	100	125	39	22	15	4	2	191	122
		(15.80)	(19.75)	(6.16)	(3.47)	(2.70)	(0.63)	(0.31)	(25.28)	(19.27)
	N	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Eggs	Y	76	114	38	22	13	4	2	160	119
		(12.00)	(18.01)	(6.00)	(3.42)	(2.05)	(0.63)	(0.31)	(25.28)	(18.80)
	N	27	12	1	-	2	-	-	33	5
Milk	Y	83	117	38	22	14	4	2	160	105
		(14.06)	(18.48)	(6.00)	(3.42)	(2.21)	(0.63)	(0.31)	(25.75)	(16.59)
	N	20	9	1	-	1	-	1	33	19
Dal	Y	76	125	38	21	13	4	2	173	113
		(12.00)	(19.75)	(6.00)	(3.31)	(2.05)	(0.63)	(0.31)	(27.33)	(17.85)
	N	27	1	1	1	2	-	1	20	11
Vege	Y	97	125	39	22	15	4	2	180	120
		(15.32)	(19.75)	(6.16)	(3.47)	(2.37)	(0.63)	(0.31)	(28.44)	(18.33)
	N	6	1	-	-	-	-	1	13	4
Meat	Y	83	123	39	22	14	4	2	184	120
		(13.11)	(19.43)	(6.16)	(3.47)	(2.21)	(0.63)	(0.31)	(29.07)	(18.96)
	N	20	3	-	-	1	-	1	9	4
Fruit	Y	75	120	38	22	14	4	2	171	113
		(11.85)	(18.96)	(6.0)	(3.47)	(2.21)	(0.63)	(0.31)	(27.01)	(17.85)
	N	28	6	1	-	1	-	1	22	11
Others	Y	55	110	37	21	14	3	2	155	115
		(8.69)	(17.38)	(5.84)	(3.32)	(2.21)	(0.47)	(0.31)	(24.49)	(18.17)
	N	48	16	2	1	1	1	1	38	9
Total		103	126	39	22	15	4	3	193	124
		(16.23)	(19.90)	(6.16)	(3.47)	(2.37)	(0.63)	(0.47)	(30.49)	(14.60)



**Table - 6.3**  
**Respondants' Use of the Intoxicants**

Item	Rural		Urban	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1. Biri/Cigarette	17	6.12	54	18.03
2. Alcohol	1	0.36	3	1.00
3. Chewing Tobacco	133	48.14	76	25.38
4. Both 1 & 2 above	22	7.96	10	3.34
5. Both 1 & 3 above	27	9.77	1	0.33
6. Both 2 & 3 above	3	1.08	-	-
7. All 1,2,3 above	18	6.51	-	-
8. None	-	-	116	38.74
9. N. R.	55	19.91	39	13.02
Total	276	99.85	299	99.84

**Table - 6.4**  
**Physical Condition of the Respondant**  
(in per cent)

Physical Condition	Urban			Rural		
	Unchanged	Gone Down	N.R.	Unchanged	Gone Down	N.R.
1. Vision	50.76	47.42	1.67	52.21	43.80	2.89
2. Hearing	76.48	20.70	2.67	72.40	26.42	1.08
3. Sleep	79.82	21.71	1.67	74.57	17.01	8.32
4. Bone Joint	64.12	33.40	2.33	68.24	30.40	3.25
5. Memory	79.82	17.03	30.01	68.05	27.15	4.70
6. Psychomotor	83.16	10.68	6.01	72.03	23.53	4.34
7. Bowel Habit	16.15	23.04	3.67	69.86	14.11	15.92

Table - 6.5

**Common Ailments of the Respondants**  
(in per cent)

Ailments	Rural			Urban		
	No	Yes	N.R.	No	Yes	N.R.
1. Blood Pressure	82.72	18.82	0.36	72.47	25.05	5.34
2. Prolonged Coughing	57.55	41.66	0.36	84.16	11.35	4.34
3. Diabetics	98.10	0.72	1.08	91.85	4.00	4.00
4. Lever/Jaundice	97.14	1.54	0.72	92.51	2.67	4.34
5. Stroke	98.10	0.72	1.08	97.19	2.00	4.00

### Hospital Service

During the last 2 years 10.86 per cent rural and 13.69 per cent urban respondents were admitted to the hospitals. 9.41 per cent rural and one-third of the urban respondents were satisfied with the hospital services. Nearly three-fourth rural (73.84%) and half of urban (51.77%) respondents went to the private practitioners for health problems. One-fourth of the urban (25.38%) and one-eighth (12.30%) rural ones visited the Government dispensaries and 15.56 per cent urban visited rural hospitals and 11.58 per cent ruralites went to the CGHS dispensaries, when they were unwell (Table-6.6). As much as 79.64 per cent rural and 89.17 per cent urban respondents were satisfied with the medical attention they received.

Table - 6.6

**Types of the Hospitals Visited by the Respondants**  
(in per cent)

Types of Hospitals	Urban	Rural
1. Pvt. Practitioners	51.77	73.84
2. Nursing Home	2.00	0.35
3. CGHS Dispensaries	2.33	11.58
4. Govt. Dispensaries	25.38	12.30
5. Refral Hospitals	15.56	0.72
6. Any Other	3.00	3.08

About 18 per cent respondents (almost half of them each were rural and urban) were admitted to the hospitals with blood pressure. About one-fifth of the rural respondents



went to the hospitals for cough and cold. Our data suggest that rural people visited the hospitals more than urban (Table-6.7). The distance was not much as the hospitals are nearby for most of the localities under study. Asked of the time taken for the treatment, the responses were that the time was associated with the doctor's advice and the nature of the sickness. Invariably the patients were satisfied with the treatment. A total of 27.8 per cent respondents spent money on medical treatment ranging from less than Rs. 50 to Rs. 200 and more. Nearly 10 per cent of them (9.16%) spent less than Rs. 50 a month, while only 3.8 per cent and mostly urban, spent Rs. 201 and more on medicine.

**Table - 6.7**

**Respondants' Reasons for Being Admitted to the Hospitals**

Sicknesses														
Locale	Blood Pressure		Coughing		Sugar		Liver		Kidney		Stroke		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Rural	50	8.65	21	3.63	9	1.55	4	0.69	9	1.55	8	1.38	101	17.47
Urban	54	9.34	114	19.13	1	0.17	4	0.69	7	1.21	2	0.34	182	31.48
	84	17.99	135	23.36	10	1.72	8	1.38	16	2.76	10	1.76	283	47.22

Nearly half of the respondents (47.39%) reported not to be concerned with personal, familial and financial issues during the last one year. About one-fifth of them (more in urban) were worried on such issues in the preceding year (Table-6.2). 4.73 per cent had the worried of health, 4.89 per cent of finances, 3.63 per cent on the issues relating to households and children and other 2.52 per cent had other worries (Table-6.9).

**Table - 6.8**

**Response on Whether the Respondants had some Worries**

Locale	Yes		No		N.A.		N.R.		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Urban	67	11.59	112	19.37	116	20.07	4	0.69	299	51.13
Rural	50	8.65	162	28.02	2	0.34	62	11.72	276	47.73
	117	20.24	274	47.39	118	20.41	66	11.41	575	98.86

Table - 6.9

## Nature of Respondants Worries

Reasons	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Health	4	0.63	26	4.10	30	4.73
2. Finance	7	1.10	24	3.79	31	4.89
3. Households & Children	4	0.63	19	3.00	23	3.63
4. Others	14	2.21	2	0.31	16	2.52
	29	4.67	71	11.20	100	15.86

The above table indicates that urban people are more worried than the rural. An over whelmingly large number of urban respondants were worried on the above issues. It is interesting to know that 3 respondants went to bed between 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and got up between 4 am. to 6 am. One-third of them went to bed between 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. and got up between 4 to 6 am. and more than one-half (53.72%) of the respondants rose from the bed between 4 to 6 am. who had gone to bed after 10 p.m.

To sum up, the senior citizens were immobile and non-sporting. They were basically rice and meat eaters; smoked biris or cigarettes, and were addicted to chewing tobacco. It was a relatively healthy groups of people, who visited Govt. and private medical clinics for the treatment of their ailments. Rural respondants visited the hospitals more than the urban for serious cases of coughing. Every tenth respondants spent upto Rs. 50 on medicine. The main worries of the senior citizens were financial problems and their own health.



## 7. SOCIAL ASPECTS

Senior citizens' social world begins at home. About one-tenth of them spent their time with their wives, about every sixth with their daughters, and about one-fifth of them spent their time with their grand children. Other relatives with whom the respondents spent their time were husbands (3.6%), sisters (3.12%), sons (4.08%), children (8.64%) and all the above relatives. About 6.72 per cent respondents were left to loneliness (Table-7.1 (A) & (B)). They discussed many issues with their relatives. Family problems (9.36%) Health (6.48%), Social Problems (5.52%), Education (7.2%), Finance (3.12%), Children (3.36%) and their past lives were other topics of their discussion. About one-third respondents did not respond or the issue was not applicable for them. Some way or other our data from Laitumkhrah could not be included in the above table.

The senior citizens loved most their wives (1.08%), husbands (1.08%), sons (5.00% urban & 1.12% rural), daughters (9.35% urban & 4.6% rural), grand children (11.69% urban & 5.79% rural), all children (25.05% urban & 4.7% rural) and their spouses' children (3.68% urban & 6.51% rural). About one-third of them (3.3% urban & 30.77% rural) loved all members of the families, an answer which made no meaning (Table-7.2).

Table - 7.1 (A)

Relatives with Whom the Respondants Spend their Time  
(in per cent)

Relatives	Rural	Urban	Total
1. Wife	5.52	3.84	9.36
2. Husband	1.92	1.68	3.60
3. Sister	0.48	2.64	3.12
4. Mother	0.98	-	0.98
5. Son	0.48	3.60	4.08
6. Daughter	6.72	8.64	15.32
7. Children	7.44	1.20	3.64
8. Grand Children	12.00	7.20	19.20
9. All	1.20	1.92	3.12
10. Alone	6.72	-	6.72
11. Other	4.80	4.56	9.36
12. N. R.	15.60	0.72	16.32
	66.83	33.03	99.86

Table - 7.1 (B)

The Issues Discussed Between the Respondants and Their  
Relatives  
(in per cent)

Issues	Rural	Urban	Total
1. Children	2.40	0.96	3.36
2. Family Problem	1.44	7.92	9.36
3. Finances	3.12	-	3.12
4. Health	4.08	2.40	6.48
5. Many Issues	19.44	-	19.44
6. Social Problem	1.92	3.60	5.52
7. Kids Education	2.40	4.80	7.20
8. Past Lives	-	0.72	0.72
9. Other Issues	0.24	10.32	10.56
10. N. A.	10.80	4.80	15.60
11. N. R.	20.40	0.48	20.88
	66.24	35.00	101.24

Table - 7.2

Whom do You Love Most

Relations	Urban	Rural
1. Wife	-	1.08
2. Husband	-	1.08
3. Sons	5.00	2.16
4. Daughters	9.35	4.70
5. Grand Children	11.69	5.79
6. All Children	25.05	4.70
7. Wife's/Husband's Children	3.16	6.51
8. All	33.02	30.77
9. N. A.	12.02	43.77
	99.77	99.86



Table - 7.3

**Senior Citizen's Influence on Education of Children,  
Marriage of Young People and Economic Transaction in the  
Families**

Concerned Members of the Family	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
<b>A. Matters of Children Education</b>		
1. Parents	57.78	66.24
2. Your Own	21.04	20.34
3. Heads of the Families	9.35	12.30
4. Others	1.67	0.36
5. N.R.	10.02	0.36
	99.86	99.60
<b>B. Matters Relating to Marriage of Young People</b>		
1. Parents	57.11	66.24
2. Your Own	24.71	20.00
3. Heads of the Families	6.01	12.30
4. Others	2.00	-
5. N.R.	10.02	1.08
	99.85	99.62
<b>C. Matters Concerning Financial Transaction</b>		
1. Parents	53.44	66.79
2. Your Own	26.92	18.46
3. Heads of the Families	13.36	15.56
4. Others	1.33	-
5. N.R.	3.34	3.08
	99.19	100.89

In the matters of children's education it were the parents (57.78% urban, 66.24% rural), and the heads of the families (9.35% urban, 12.30% rural), whose opinions prevailed in more than two-thirds of the urban and three-fourth of the rural areas. About one-fifth of the senior citizen's opinion mattered in both the areas in terms of children's education. In the matters relating to the marriage of young boys and girls, almost the same scenario prevailed as in the case of the Children education. However, in case of buying or sales of property etc. the scene changed to some extent (Table-7.3). It were 53.44 per cent urban and 64.79 per cent rural concerned members of the families, whose opinion prevailed in such matters. The opinion of the heads of the families were decisive for the

economic transactions in case of 13.36 per cent urban and 15.50 per cent rural respondents. However, more than one-fourth of the urban (26.82%) and less than one-fifth of the rural (18.46%) senior citizens influenced the decisions in matters pertaining to economic transactions.

At the time of research as much as about two-thirds of the senior citizens (35.46% urban & 29.41% rural) were helping members of their families and about one-third of them (14.53% urban & 19.95% rural) were not. In event of their indulgence solicited to be a little more helpful to the members of their families, about 40 per cent of them were reluctant, while almost the same per cent of them were forthcoming and about one-tenth of them were negative (Table-7.4).

Table - 7.4

**Helping and Intending to Help the Families**  
(in per cent)

Location	Actually Helping			Intending to Help			
	No.	Yes	N.R.	No.	Yes	Undecided	N.R.
Urban	15.53	35.46	1.73	3.80	25.08	19.89	2.94
Rural	19.95	29.41	1.38	8.13	17.12	20.76	1.73
Total	34.48	64.87	3.11	11.92	42.20	40.65	4.77

More than one-tenth each from rural and urban areas aged persons provided finance to the families and one-sixth of the urban respondents did household work to help their families. Another one-tenth of them provided their sane advice to their families. Other ways through which the respondents helped their families were caring for the kids (3.1%), providing support to the families (1.55%) and helping as per the situation (6.07%). However, about 40 per cent of the respondents decided not to respond the question (Table 7.5 A). Enquired of whether the respondents could be a little more helpful to their families, more than one-fifth of them (22.83%) were unsure of themselves. Others felt that they could provide finance (17.63%), entertain the guests (0.68%); do household work (2.24%), on various ways (2.06%) and etc. (Table-7.5 B). As much as one-fourth of them did not reply the query.

The next question (No. 46) was one of the most cumbersome to our respondents. Most of them totally ignored it. Only about 7 per cent of them, all of them from rural areas, replied to the third part of the question enumerated



finance and pecuniary conditions (2.52%), landed property (0.36%), conflict (0.36%), education of the children (0.72%), problem of associated with daughters (1.81%) and other reasons (1.08%).

**Table - 7.5 A**

**Respondants Ways in Helping Their Families**  
(in per cent)

Manners of Help	Rural	Urban	Total
1. Finance	11.24	10.89	22.13
2. Household Work	0.34	12.45	12.79
3. Caring for Kids	0.34	2.76	3.10
4. Advice	5.88	3.80	9.10
5. Supporting Families	1.55	-	1.55
6. Situational Help	3.10	3.97	7.07
7. N. A.	0.86	-	0.86
8. N. R.	23.70	17.81	41.51
	47.10	51.68	99.78

**Table - 7.6 B**

**Respondants' Possible Manner to Assist Their Families**  
(in per cent)

Ways to Future Assistance	Rural	Urban	Total
1. Financial	5.70	11.93	17.63
2. Household Work	1.38	0.86	2.24
3. Advice	1.73	3.97	5.70
4. No Particular Reason	2.07	1.55	3.62
5. In Various Ways	2.07	-	2.07
6. Looking After Kids	0.34	7.61	7.95
7. Entertaining Guests	0.17	0.51	0.68
8. Fulfilling Various Needs	0.34	7.61	7.95
9. Can't Say	6.92	15.91	22.16
10. N. A.	9.16	-	9.16
11. N. R.	17.64	7.70	25.42
	47.69	51.67	99.36

To sum up, the senior citizens spent their time with their daughters, wives and grand children; discussed children, children's education, family and social problems, health and past time they had and loved all children, grand

children in particular, daughters, sons and their spouses in that order. In their views in educating children, parents, heads of the families and old peoples' voices were heard; in matters of marriage it were the parents, old people and the heads of the families, whose advice were sought and in these financial issues it were the persons concerned, heads of the families and the old people, who mattered. Two-thirds of them were actually helping and more than 2/5 were intending to help their families in future. The manners of their help were financial, household work, advice, caring for the kids and they would like to continue in the same ways. Their worries were associated with finance, property, conflicts and children education.



## 8. PAST-TIME AND ASSOCIATIONS

The question (No. 47) on daily routine and its details were considered to be trivial and inconsequential. Three-fourth of the respondents decided not to respond to it. Out of the rest one-fourth of them were busy in household and personal work. One-tenth of them earned their daily wages; did their formal jobs or sat at their shops. Some of them were busy with children and grand children, doing farming, sleeping or were simply unable to work, because of their physical handicap. More than half of the respondents (31.48% urban & 22.14% rural) had some persons in their neighbourhood whom they regularly met with.

Again, the question No. 48 was long and tiring one, which demanded a lot of concentration. All the rural and more than four-fifth of the urban respondents decided not to answer it. In order of listing, their worries were sickness, alcoholism, children's future, chaotic present, social evils, old age, conflict and death. They were afraid of the ways of the younger generation, religious uncertainties, sickness, family problems, infirmities, uncertain future, loneliness and social evils in that order.

### Media Awareness

News papers and magazines : Almost half of the respondents (34.35% rural & 14.70% urban) did not read news papers (Table-8.1). As much as 60 per cent senior citizens (22.14% urban & 37.54% rural) did not read magazines and books. About 10 per cent rural (7.95% occasionally & 2.24% regularly) and about 30 per cent urban (20.58% occasionally & 7.43% regularly) respondents read the magazines and books.

Audio-Visual Exposures : Slightly more than one-fifth of the respondents (5.88% urban & 16.95% rural) were not in habit of listening to the radio broadcasts and as much as 3/4th of them (49.99% occasional & 25.77% regular) listened to its programmes. In both the cases, the urban listeners (29.41% occasional & 15.75% regular) were 50 per cent than that of the rural (20.58% occasional & 10.03% regular). About 8 per cent urban and 19.89 per cent rural respondents were not exposed to the television programmes. On the other hand, 48.25 per cent (19.03% occasional & 27.50% regular) urban and only 27.85 per cent (15.57% occasional & 12.28% regular) rural respondents watched television programmes.

Games and Association with Clubs, etc. : As many as 87.53 per cent respondents (42.21% urban & 45.32% rural) did not like any indoor games. Less than 10 per cent of them (7.61% urban & 2.00% rural) had interests in the indoor games. More than 90 per cent respondents were neither a member of any club nor social organisation at their places (Table-8.2). Less than 4 per cent urban and rural residents were

associated with a village or a city club. Similarly 4.32 per cent urban and 2.42 per cent rural residents were members of any cultural association etc.

**Table - 8.1**

**Media Exposure of the Respondant**  
(in per cent)

Locale	No	Occasional	Regular	N. A.	N. R.	Total
<b>A. Newspapers Readings</b>						
1. Urban	14.70	19.20	16.95	0.34	0.51	51.70
2. Rural	34.25	9.68	1.38	0.34	0.34	45.39
	48.95	28.88	18.33	0.68	0.85	97.35
<b>B. Magazines and Book Readings</b>						
1. Urban	22.14	20.58	7.43	0.68	0.85	51.68
2. Rural	37.54	7.95	2.24	-	0.17	47.90
	59.68	28.53	9.67	0.68	1.05	99.58
<b>C. Listening Radio Broadcast</b>						
1. Urban	5.88	29.41	15.74	0.68	-	51.71
2. Rural	16.95	20.58	10.03	0.17	-	47.73
	22.83	49.99	25.77	0.85	-	98.44
<b>D. Watching Television Programmes</b>						
1. Urban	2.94	19.03	27.50	0.34	0.17	49.95
2. Rural	19.89	15.57	12.28	-	-	47.74
	22.83	34.60	39.78	0.34	0.17	97.72



Table - 8.2 A

**Senior Citizens' Social and Cultural Association**  
(in per cent)

Locale	No	Yes	N. R.	Total
1. Urban	46.63	3.63	1.73	51.72
2. Rural	44.11	3.46	0.17	37.74
	90.47	7.09	1.90	99.46

Table - 8.2 B

**Membership of a Cultural association**  
(in per cent)

Locale	No	Yes	N. R.	Total
1. Urban	46.36	4.32	1.03	51.71
2. Rural	44.20	2.42	0.34	47.00
	90.56	6.74	1.37	98.71

For the question No. 53 to 55 less than 10 per cent respondents opined positively. Even these few affirmative responses were so casual that the responses were negligible. Only 5 per cent of the respondents informed us that they occasionally played games of Cards, Carom, Chess, Ludo, Chinese Checker and in rare cases Badminton. Except religious associations, they were not members of any club or association.

The picture, which emerges at the end of this chapter, is that of a totally inactive lot of humanity. Not very many respondents provided with the affirmative answers to their daily routines, neighbourhood, worries and source of fear. While sickness, alcoholism, grand children's future, social evil, old age, conflict and death were their worries, they were afraid of younger generation, religious uncertainties, sickness, infirmities, loneliness and social evils. More than half of them did not read newspaper and about one-fourth of them did not listen to the radio-broadcasts and watch television programmes. Similarly nearly 9 out of 10 did not like any indoor games.

## 9. SERVICE FOR THE AGED

A bunch of three questions were addressed to the aged whether the families, neighbours or aged themselves could do something to make the lived of aged better. The multiple suggested answer were 'No', 'No Opinion' and 'Yes' and in the case of the last answer, a further query was made to get the details. Many of them had (5.56%) no definite negative opinions. However, 42.55 per cent of the respondents (20.76% urban & 21.79% rural) formed no opinion on the issue. Nearly half of them (27.16% urban & 21.16% rural) realized that the family groups could do something to improve the lot of the aged. As much as 40 per cent respondents did not answer the follow-on question. Among those who answered, 80 per cent did not have a positive answer and for the rest financial support, facilities, prestige, fulfilling their needs looking after them were to be provided.

The same question was asked to the neighbours. Here the negative answers increased more than double of the same answers given above (15.91%) for the families. Urban residents were more uncertain (30.27% urban against 16.08% rural) than that of their rural counterparts on the role of the neighbours. Only about 1/3rd of the senior citizens and about 16 per cent in each case felt that their neighbours could do something to make their lives better by adopting new ways, looking after them, providing medicine and other helps.

On their own role in improvement of their lot, urban respondents were more confused (16.95%) than that of the rural (9.86%). About 1/4th of them (12.80% urban & 10.55% rural) felt that they had no role in making their lives better. It was the rural residents (26.46%) who had more faith in themselves than that of their urban counterparts (17.99%) in making lives better than the existent (Table-9.1).



Table - 9.1

**Respondants' Perception on Their Own, Neighbours' and Family Role in Making Their Lives Better**

Locale	No	No Opinion	Yes	NR	Total
<b>A. Role of Family Group to Improve the Lot of Aged</b>					
Urban	2.76	20.76	27.16	1.03	51.71
Rural	3.80	21.79	21.27	0.86	47.72
	6.56	42.55	48.43	1.89	99.43
<b>B. Role of Neighbours in Improving the Lot of Aged</b>					
Urban	1.73	30.27	16.26	1.79	49.99
Rural	14.18	16.08	16.60	0.86	49.70
	15.91	46.35	32.86	2.59	99.69
<b>C. Role of the Old People Themselves in Improving their Lot</b>					
Urban	12.80	16.95	17.99	2.24	49.98
Rural	10.55	9.86	16.46	0.86	47.73
	23.35	26.82	44.45	3.10	97.91

**Old Age Pension and Homes**

As much as 45.05 per cent respondents (18.33% Urban & 27.72% Rural) had not heard of old age pension scheme and similarly, 38.69 per cent of them (10.97% Urban & 27.72% Rural) did not know existence of old age home in the town (Table-9.2). It were the urban respondents, who were more aware of old age pension scheme (32.52% Urban against 20.06% Rural) and old age home (38.40% Urban against 23.35% Rural). As a whole, old age home was known to more (61.75%) respondents than that of the old age pension scheme. More than 2/3rds of the respondents (68.50%) did not know the existence of a day-care or hobby-centre for the aged in the town. Slightly more than 1/6th urban and 1/10th rural respondents had heard of such centres. Only 1/6th of the respondents felt that they could suggest means to improve the effectiveness of the old age home. Among the answers in order of preference were the following : Medical Care (4.34%), Providing Better Food and Facilities (3.57%), Building more Homes (3.4%), Financial Aid (3.11%), Social Recognition to the Work (1.55%), Understanding Old Peoples' Psyche (0.51%) and Kindness and Sympathy (0.34%).

Table - 9.2

## Awareness of Old Age Welfare Schemes

Locale	No	Yes	N. R.	Total
<b>A. Awareness of Old Age Pensions</b>				
Urban	18.33	12.52	0.86	51.71
Rural	27.72	20.06	0.34	48.12
	46.05	52.58	1.20	99.93
<b>B. Awareness of Old Age Home</b>				
Urban	10.97	38.40	0.34	49.71
Rural	27.72	23.35	21.27	51.56
	38.69	61.75	0.85	101.27
<b>C. Awareness of Day-Care and Hobby Centers for Aged</b>				
Urban	35.29	17.12	-	52.41
Rural	33.21	11.93	2.93	47.73
	68.50	29.05	2.93	100.14

## Attitude to Voluntary Programmes and Social Problems

We felt that the senior citizen's perception of society and social problems needed to be understood. For that matter about half a dozen issues were identified and involvement of the old persons was requested (Table-9.3). More than 1/3rd of the urban (35.98%) and only its 1/3rd rural (11.41%) respondents desired to be a party to the neighbourhood watch scheme. Nearly half of the respondents (39.61% Urban & 11.09% Rural) wanted to take care of the infants of the working women. Almost the same percent of elders (39.44% & 10.90%) were willing to help the young by providing employment information and guidance. 53.79 per cent respondents (42.21% Urban & 11.50% Rural) desired to help the Craft classes for the girls. More than 50 per cent of them (41.87% Urban & 13.32% Rural) wanted to take part in environmental programmes such as tree plantation, etc. Again at least half of the respondents were willing to take up some other socially relevant programmes. The Table 9.3 makes it clear that around 10 per cent rural and 40 per cent urban respondents were positively inclined on the socially significant issues. It appears that the range of negative



attitude from 20 to 30 per cent among the rural respondents was indicative of their relative lack of awareness. About 1/5th of them identified transportation, alcoholism and drug use, water scarcity, unemployment, political corruption, social evil, and lack of development as main problems faced by the society.

About 1/5th of them (3.63% Urban & 18.16% Rural) felt that the social conditions would improve in future. While more than 1/4th of them (15.91% urban & 9.61% Rural) were certain that things would worsen in future. A significant section of more than 1/3rd of the total (21.0% Urban & 15.39% Rural) were uncertain of the future and 3.79 per cent of the respondents had no opinion on the issue (Table-9.4). Less than 1/10th of them (8.47%) felt that nothing would change in future. As much as 1/10th of the respondents were afraid of something or other. We failed to get the details of those reasons.

Table - 9.3

Respondants' Attitudes to Social Problems

Issues	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Yes	No	N.R.	Yes	No	N.R.	Yes	No	N.R.
Neighbour- hood Watch Scheme	35.98	5.31	8.65	11.91	28.71	8.41	47.39	13.78	18.86
Adult Ed. Drive	39.61	4.49	7.61	8.47	29.41	6.74	48.08	39.90	14.86
Care to Working Mother's Infant	39.44	3.80	8.41	11.07	29.24	4.44	50.51	33.04	13.91
Guidance to Youth/ Employment Information	39.44	4.15	4.13	10.90	30.09	6.74	50.34	34.24	14.07
Craft Classes for Young Girls	42.21	1.90	9.34	11.58	28.08	8.13	53.79	29.93	37.37
Tree Plan- tation	41.87	2.94	8.47	13.32	21.27	9.51	55.19	24.21	17.98
Any Other	39.79	0.86	11.07	12.47	21.44	13.84	52.24	22.30	24.91

As per the researchers' assessments in 71.27 per cent cases, physical condition of the respondents was alright. While every tenth person was a sick one. In more than 80 per cent cases, they dressed reasonably well. About 2/3rds of them were friendly and laborious. 15.56 per cent respondents had no involvement in any productive work as they were either physically handicapped or too sick to do any thing.

**Table - 9.4**

**Respondants Views on Future of Society**  
(in per cent)

Response	Urban	Rural	Total
Will Turn Worse	15.91	9.61	25.92
Can't Say	21.10	15.39	36.49
Remain Unchanged	5.53	2.94	8.47
Will Improve	3.63	18.16	21.79
No Opinion	3.28	0.51	3.79
N. R.	2.24	0.85	3.09

To sum up, 40 to 75 per cent respondents felt that family, neighbours and they themselves could do nothing to improve their lot. Almost half of them did not know about old age pension and had not heard of old age home at Shillong. Similarly Day-Care and Bobby Centres were unknown to them. About half of them were willing to be involved in the social programmes such as neighbourhood watch, adult education drive, care for infants of the working mothers, employment information and guidance to the youth, craft classes for the girls, tree plantation, etc. About 1/5th of them felt that the social conditions would improve in future.



## 10. THE MERCY HOME

### The Living Conditions in an Old Age Home at Shillong, Meghalaya

Increased longevity means natural addition in the number of old persons in the society, dependent on scarce resources. After an active and productive phase of their lives, the old persons find themselves socially marginalized as more promising social segments attract attention. Moreover, society is undergoing a phase of social transition in which traditional pattern of caring and according status to the aged is vanishing fast. No wonder, they find themselves neglected, homeless and without means to take care of themselves. This phenomena is more prevalent in the urban areas than that of the rural ones. Some voluntary agencies, aided by the Government and private bodies, have established institutions (homes) to take care of such needy senior citizens. We have examined the social background, economic and financial base, food and dietary provisions, health status and expectations of the inmates and the facilities and services available at an old age home at shillong.

#### THE MERCY HOME

The Mercy Home, the old age home located at Alugodam, Nongthymmai, Shillong was started in 1973 by the Roman Catholic Missionaries with a view to serve the aged destitutes. Prior to that, they had an old age home at Dimapur, Nagaland, which was not patronized by Naga destitutes, as they believe to die under their own roof under the care of their clansmen. Since then in a way, the home was shifted to Shillong with Sr. Anjaline (78), a missionary trained in nursing. It has a total staff of 7 (Administrative - 1, Professional - 1, Clerical- 1 and 4th class supporting staff of 4) and a capacity to house 50 inmates, though there were 54 residing on the occasion of the study. It has its own concrete imposing building with 51,000 Sq. feet built in area. It has its own kitchen, bath rooms, reading room, common room, radio & TV. set, first hand aid box, portable water supply, electricity, adequate furniture and the Home provides satisfactory bedding & clothing to the inmates. It has no provisions for the indoor games and curative facilities for those who get serious infectious disease. The Home runs a school with boarding house attached to it and its income, if any, goes to the Home. It receives annual grants from the Ministry of Welfare, Government of India, besides the occasional contributions received from the individuals, institutions, etc. The grants received and the expenditure incurred during the last three years is given below.



Table - 10.1

**The Statement on Income and Expenditure of Mercy Home  
1988-91**

Year	Source	Income	Expenditure
1988-89	Social Welfare	Rs. 34,000.00	Rs. 51,172.55
	Other Sources	Rs. 40,314.60	
1989-90	Social Welfare	Rs. 50,000.00	Rs. 85,034.69
	Other Sources	-	
1990-91	Social Welfare	Rs. 60,000.00	Rs. 85,460.17
	Other Sources	Rs. 26,949.00	
		Rs. 2,11,263.60	Rs. 2,21,667.41

The above figures work out an average monthly income and expenditure of Rs. 108.67 and Rs. 114.02 per person respectively. It means that on an average daily personal income of Rs. 3.6, the Home spends Rs. 3.80 per person per day. These ludicrously insufficient figures themselves exhibit the hopeless state of affairs in the Home. With the above budgetary provisions much improvement in the present condition of the Home can not be expected.

### **Personal Background of the Inmates**

With a capacity of 50, the Home has housed 54 inmates in 1991. Out of them, 61.12 per cent were male and 38.88 per cent were female and 94.45 per cent Christian, 2.7 per cent Hindus, 1.85 per cent (i.e. one individual) were Muslims. About 60 per cent of them were between 60 and 70 years of age, while 18.5 per cent were above 80 years of age. As much as 74 per cent spoke Khasi, 14.8 per cent Jaintia and about 10 per cent spoke other languages. As much as 94.45 per cent belonged to the scheduled tribes, and 5.5 per cent were others. About 1/4th of them (18.5% male & 7.4% female) claimed to be married, 14.8 per cent males and 5.5 per cent females were unmarried, only one person (a female) claimed to be divorcee, 25.9 per cent females were widows, 22.2 per cent males were widowers and 2.7 per cent each males reported to be separated and deserted by their spouses. About 1/5th of the respondents (18.5%) between 60 & 65 years of age were unmarried, while about 1/3rd of them (35.15%) were widows and widowers. Divorced (1.85%), Separated (3.7%) and deserted (3.7%) were in the age group of 64 years & above. As much as 70 per cent of the respondents were illiterate, one each was a graduate and an intermediate degree holder, 7.4 per cent each studied upto middle school and matriculation and 10 per cent were just literate.



## Approach to the Home

About one-sixth of the respondents (16.65%) had been in the Home for as much as nine years and above, 3.7% for 8 to 9 years, 14.8% between 6 to 7 years, 18.5% for 4 to 5 years, about one-fifth of them (20.35%) resided in the Home for less than a year and the maximum number of the respondents did not wait for admission to the Home and only 5.5% had to wait for getting admission to the Home. 16.65% respondents informed that nobody had approached Home for the admission on their behalf, while 77.7 per cent of them reported that some one approached the Home for them. Among them 16.65 per cent were friends, 55.5 per cent were the missionaries and the rest were the relatives (Table-10.3). The Home functionaries reported that it were village pastors, who selected the inmates on the basis of their over-all conditions and once they were convinced that old individual would be better off in the Home they recommended the case for admission to the Home. In fact, the Home functions as a link between the

Table - 10.2

### Senior Citizen's Length of Stay at Old Age Home

No. of Years	No. of Persons	Per cent
1. Upto 1 Year	11	20.30
2. 2 to 3 Years	14	25.90
3. 4 to 5 Years	10	18.50
4. 6 to 7 Years	8	14.80
5. 8 to 9 Years	2	3.70
6. 9 Years & Above	9	16.65
	54	98.95

Table - 10.3

### Approached the Home on Behalf of the Inmates

Agencies	Nos.	Per cent
1. Friends	9	16.65
2. Missionaries	30	55.50
3. Sons/Daughters	4	7.40
4. Relatives	6	11.10
5. Neighbours	1	1.85
6. N. A.	4	7.40
	54	99.90

various missionary institutions with their Headquarters at Shillong and other Church activities spread through out the different villages.

### Family Background

Out of 70.3 per cent illiterate respondents 27.75 per cent were cultivators, 20.35 per cent were labourers and 9.25 per cent reported no occupation (Table-10.4). As much as 37 per cent respondents reported no occupation. Out of 30 respondents claiming to be cultivators, 2/3rds were males and both the sexes had almost equal representation in no occupation and labourer categories. 57.35 per cent of them reported that they had a monthly income upto Rs. 1000 a month and only one informed that he had an income between Rs. 1000 to Rs. 2000 per month and rest of them had no

**Table- 10.4**

#### Occupations of the Mercy Home Inmates

Occupation	Male		Female		Total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1. Cultivation	10	18.50	5	9.25	15	27.75
2. Manual Labour	6	11.10	5	9.25	11	20.35
3. Others	7	12.95	1	1.85	8	14.80
4. No Occupation	10	18.50	10	18.50	20	37.00
	33	59.15	21	38.75	54	99.90

**Table - 10.5**

#### Reasons for Inmates' Coming to the Mercy Home

Reasons	Nos. of Inmates	Per cent
1. No House of My Own	3	5.50
2. No One at Home	5	9.25
3. For Happiness	1	1.85
4. No One to Look After	24	44.40
5. Children Force Me to go Out	1	1.85
6. Physical Incapability	13	24.05
7. Desire to Stay with Needy	2	3.55
8. To Stay with Husband	1	1.85
9. Difference of Opinion	3	5.50
10. No Response	1	1.85



5.5 per cent between Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 and another 5.5 per cent beyond Rs. 501 on items of their own choice. As much as 72.15 per cent respondents informed that they had no source to meet these additional expenditure. Only in one case (1.85%) a resident reported that his sister might provide him with money for the purpose.

**Table - 1.6**

**Inmates Needs Held up for Want of Money**

Unfulfilled Needs	Nos.	Per cent
1. Delicious Food	29	53.65
2. Medical Care	2	3.70
3. Clothes	2	3.70
4. Land/House	2	3.70
5. Tobacco Smoking	2	3.70
6. Rituals	1	1.85
7. Maintenance	1	1.85
8. Spectacles	1	1.85
9. Harmonium	1	1.85
10. Not Applicable	13	24.05
	54	99.90

**Issues Pertaining to Health**

More than half of the inmates of the Home (55.5%) used to go for morning & evening walks and 40.07 per cent did not do so. They did not play any outdoor game regularly. The inmates of the Home were asked whether they received Chapatis, Rice, Dal, Panner, Eggs, Milk, Meat, Vegetables, and fruits regularly as part of their diet. Paneer (14.8%), eggs (24.05%), milk (25.90%), meat (24.05%) and fruits (24.05%) were not available to them as they desired (Table-10.7). They were also asked to inform whether they used biri/cigarettes, alcohol, chewing tobacco and other intoxicants. As much as 40.7 per cent of the inmates smoked biri/cigarettes, 31.45 per cent chewed tobacco and only 18.5 per cent used alcohol (Table-10.8). Only 5.5 per cent inmates on quantity and 3.7 per cent on quality of food supplied by the Home were dis-satisfied, possibly it were those, who contributed some money for their up-keep.

Table - 10.7

## Items of Their Daily Diet

Items	Yes		No	
	Yes	%	Yes	%
Chapati	15	27.60	15	27.60
Rice	29	53.65	1	1.85
Dal	15	27.60	15	27.60
Paneer	8	14.80	23	42.50
Eggs	13	24.05	17	31.30
Milk	14	25.90	16	29.60
Meat	13	24.05	17	31.30
Fruits	13	24.05	17	31.30
Vegetables	29	53.65	-	-

Table - 10.8

## Inmates of the Home in Habit of Intoxicants

Items	Yes		No		N. R.		Total
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.
Biri/Cigarettes	22	40.70	27	49.05	5	9.25	54
Alcohol	10	18.50	39	72.15	5	9.25	54
Chewing Tobacco	17	31.45	32	59.20	5	9.25	54

So far the physical conditions of the inmates were concerned, with cultivation background in atleast 2/3rd cases memory, trembling, bowel habits remained unchanged. More than half of the cases of hearing, sleep and bone joints also remained unaltered and 80 per cent cases vision was gone. All the labourers had lost their vision, more than 50 per cent had lost their hearing, sleep, memory and had pain in their bone joints. The most common health complaints the inmates had was that of coughing. Possibly because of the fluctuating weather condition at Shillong.



Table - 10.9

## Physical Handicaps of the Mercy Home Inmates and Their Past Occupation

Physical Handicaps	Past Occupation								Total
	Cultivation		Labour		Others		No Occupation		
	Unaltered	Gone Down	Unaltered	Gone Down	Unaltered	Gone Down	Unaltered	Gone Down	
1. Vision	3	12	0	11	1	7	9	11	54
2. Hearing	8	7	5	6	4	4	13	7	54
3. Sleep	8	7	3	8	6	2	11	9	54
4. Bone Joints Pain	9	6	2	9	2	6	10	10	54
5. Memory	10	5	4	7	5	3	16	4	54
6. Trembling	12	3	6	5	5	3	18	2	54
7. Bowel Habits	13	2	4	7	5	3	18	2	54

The most significant and common ailment for which inmates of the Home were admitted to the hospital during the past two years was coughing in 20.35 per cent. There was no significant common ailment for which they were to be hospitalised. As much as 61.05 per cent inmates were concerned with some of other personal or family matters. The reasons of their concern was no body looks after (20.30%), worry about money (16.65%), about ill-health (11.1%), being handicap (3.7%), death of wife, loneliness, conflict with wife in each of 1.85 per cent were other reasons (Table-9). So far their daily habits were concerned, as much as 68.45 per cent of the inmates were in the habit of going to bed between 7 to 9 P.M. and arise between 4 to 6 A.M. and 3.7 per cent cases they used to go to bed after 10 P.M. and get up between 7 to 9 A.M.

Table - 10.9

## Reasons for Mercy Home Inmates' worries

Reasons	Nos.	Per cent
1. Nobody Looks After Me	11	20.3
2. About Money	9	16.65
3. About Ill-Health	6	11.1
4. Handicap	2	3.7
5. Death of Wife	1	1.85
6. Loneliness	1	1.85
7. Conflict with Wife	1	1.85
8. Not Applicable	21	38.95
9. No Reply	2	3.7
	54	99.95

## Facilities at the Home

11.1 per cent inmates had their rooms with 23'/15' floor area, while 85.1 per cent of them shared rooms with a floor area of 3 Sq. feet each. Except one, all of them felt that beddings were adequate. Again only one respondent reported that he never got the medicine, while 48.1 per cent each of them informed that they got the medicine sometimes and always, when they needed. The inmates had no idea when did the doctor visit the Home or how competent he was or how much attention did he pay to the patient. As much as 68.45 per cent inmates were occasionally upset, anxious or nervous, in one-third cases (33.3%) it were the fellow inmates, who consoled the patients in such situations and in another one-third cases (35.15%) it were the sisters, functionaries, nurse etc. who consoled them. About half (49.95%) of the inmates informed that such consolations were really helpful to calm down the patients.

## Programme Activities

Library (94.5%) and news paper reading room (88.8%) were universally not used by the inmates. 3/4th of them (78.3%) did not listen the radio and watch TV. (79.55%). None of them participated in the adult-education programmes, etc. 18.5 per cent informed that some of them would want to learn something. Only 7.4 per cent felt that inmate wanted to learn some crafts. As less as 16.65 per cent inmates participated as audience in the functions organized at the Home such as **X' Mass, New Year Eve, Concerts or Cultural** programmes. They did not participate in either indoor (as there was no provision) or outdoor games. About 31.45 per



cent inmates claimed to have once participated in the picnic organized at the Home.

### Inter-Personal Relationship

About one-third of them (34.2%) were of lonely type, while 62.9 per cent were friendly lots. Even among the friendly lot they felt that some of them (24.05%) were friendly, while one-third of them (33.3%) felt that most of them were friendly. Maximum number of inmates (35.15%) engaged themselves in gardening, 11.1 per cent liked talking and telling stories, 22.2 per cent used to talk about their ill-health, handicaps, 5.5 per cent enjoyed nothing in particular, 3.7 per cent enjoyed any work assigned to them by the functionaries (Table-10.10). 7.4 per cent respondents felt that the inmates regularly disagreed with each other, while 29.6 per cent felt that it did happen sometimes. Most of the quarrels were on minor things (27.75%) and in the event of telling lies (3.7%).

Table - 10.10

#### Activities Enjoyed Most by the Mercy Home Inmates

Activity	Nos.	Per cent
Gardening	19	35.15
Talking & Story Telling	6	11.10
By Doing Any Work Assigned To	2	3.70
Not Enjoying Due To Ill-Health	12	22.20
Enjoyed Nothing In Particular	3	5.50
N. R.	12	22.20
	54	98.41

### Attitude to the Functionaries

The inmates were asked to reflect on the superintendent, sister and the Home administrator against certain human qualities. 66.6 per cent respondents ranked the superintendent as the duty conscious, while 26.25 per cent felt that the sister was interested in the residents' welfare, 20.30 per cent ranked the superintendent for being interested in the welfare of the inmates. Similarly, 7.3 per cent found the superintendent, 27.60 per cent ranked the sister and 46.25 per cent felt the administrator to be sympathetic to the residents (Table-10.11). Among functionaries Sr. sister was liked most by inmates for her kindness & sympathetic and honest approach to the inmates. Table-10.11 suggest that Mother Rose, the superintendent of

the Home remained aloof and distant from the inmates, while Sr. sister had been always around with them to console, when occasion demanded and provided for when needed. More than one-fifth (31.4%) respondents refused to identify any body from the Home, whom they did not like.

Table - 10.11  
Qualities of Home Functionaries

Qualities	Superinten dent		Sister		Admini- strator		Other		N. R.		Total
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	
Duty Conscious	36	66.6	5	9.25	-	-	-	-	13	24.05	54
Interested in Welfare	11 33.30	20.03 54	25	46.25	-	-	-	-	-	18	
Bossism	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.85	53	98.15	54
Sympa- thetic	4	7.30	15	28.60	23	46.25	-	-	11	20.03	54
Indiffe- rent	-	-	-	-	1	1.85	-	-	53	20.03	54
Honest	-	-	2	3.70	7	12.95	6	11.10	39	72.15	54
Unmindful	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54	100.00	54

#### Service for the Aged

A considerable number of respondents (42.55%) felt that the family and community could do a lot to help the aged. Among the reasons suggested were better understanding (5.5%), friendliness (16.65%), kind words (3.7%), food, cloth & financial help (5.5%), praying for them (1.85%). Only one inmate was emphatic that family and community could not help them in any way (Table-10.12).



Table - 10.12

## What can Families/Community do to Help the Old People

Response	Nos.	Per Cent
Better Understanding	3	5.5
Friendliness	9	16.65
By All Means	2	3.7
Kind Words	2	3.7
Food Clothes/Funds	3	5.5
Prayers	1	1.85
Can Not Help	1	1.85
No Response	3	5.5
N. A.	31	57.35
	54	101.60

Similarly, about one-third (29.6%) inmates felt that the neighbours could do a lot to help out the old people. Among such acts taking care (12.95%), co-operation with each other, kind words & looking after their physical needs (3.7% each cases) and prayers were enumerated (Table-10.13). Here again one inmate of the Home was emphatic that no neighbour could do good to them. The Home inmates were asked to think whether the senior citizens could do something for themselves. One-third of them felt that they could do nothing for themselves, better than one-third (35.15%) had no opinion on that, 3.7 per cent did not reply and 27.75 per cent of them felt that they could do something for themselves, but they were so over-whelmed with their problems that they failed to identify the ways through which they could help themselves. Only 16.65 per cent of them were aware of the old age pension scheme. While 11.1 per cent felt that the sum to be inadequate and only 5.5 per cent of the total felt that it was sufficient.

We enquired of the respondents whether they would suggest some means to improve the working of the Home. About one-fourth of them had no opinion. The first priority was accorded to recreation (37%), and the second highest priority was given to adequate facilities such as medicine, food, etc. and third to more frequent visit of the Doctor to the Home (Table-10.14). So, first and last concern of the old people appear to be health.

Table - 10.14

## Inmates Suggestion to Improve the Working of the Home

Suggestion	Response		
	First	Second	Third
1. No Improvement Needed	1	1	1
2. Facilities for Medicine, Food, etc.	2	21	2
3. Should be Friendly to one another	1	-	1
4. Govt. Monetary Assistance	8	5	4
5. Recreation Facilities	20	5	3
6. More Frequent Doctors' Visit	-	2	12
7. Prayer to God	2	-	-
8. To Create More Happiness	5	1	1
9. No Opinion	14	14	14
10. No Response	-	5	16
	54	54	54

The inmates were requested for opinion on the main problems faced by the society in order of any three priorities. 40.7 per cent of them had no opinion. Among those, who held their own, non-concern of the people followed by rising prices appeared to be the most serious social problems (Table-10.15). An instructive response was the one on insignificance attached to the male - especially in the matrilineal Khasis.



Table - 10.15

## Inmates Opinion on the Main Problems of Society

Main Social Problems-----	Response-----		
	First	Second	Third
1. Lack of Co-Operation	2	2	-
2. Non-Concern	12	2	-
3. Lack of Charity	1	1	1
4. Lack of Provision, Food, Clothes, etc.	1	-	2
5. No Significance Attached to Male	1	3	-
6. Rising Prices	7	2	1
7. Discord - Parents - Children and Spouse	4	3	-
8. Self Love	1	-	-
9. Un-Natural Pleasure	-	-	2
10. Alcoholism	-	1	-
11. No Response	3	17	25
12. No Opinion	22	22	22
	54	54	54

The respondents were requested to reflect on the future of the society. While 46.25 per cent of them expressed no opinion, 5.5 per cent felt it would remain the same. One-fourth of them (25.9%) were optimists and 22.2 per cent were pessimist for the society in future (Table-10.16).

Table - 10.16

## Inmates Opinion on the Future of the Society

Response-----	Nos.	Per Cent
Will Turn Worse	12	22.2
Will Remain Unchanged	3	5.5
Will Improve	14	25.9
No Opinion	25	46.25
	54	99.85

At the end, the interviewers were expected to comment on physical conditions, ailments and respondents' relations with other inmates. Similarly, the Home functionaries were requested to comment on respondents' personal qualities and

involvement in some or other productive work: the responses have been tabulated below (Table-10.17). While 70 per cent

Table - 10.17

Inmates Condition, Attitude and Involvement

Observation	Physical Condition		Ailment		Relation With Inmates		'RS' Characteristic Features		'RS' Involvement	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1. Alright	38	70.30	1	1.85	49	90.65	-	-	-	-
2. Not Alright	1	1.85	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3.70
3. Friendly	-	-	-	-	-	-	49	90.65	-	-
4. Labourious	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.85	36	66.60
5. Physically Unfit	3	5.50	6	11.10	-	-	-	-	5	9.25
6. Sick	2	3.70	17	29.40	-	-	-	-	3	5.50
7. Inactive	4	7.40	1	1.85	-	-	-	-	2	3.70
8. Unfriendly	-	-	-	-	3	5.50	2	3.70	-	-
9. Handicapped	1	1.85	7	12.75	-	-	-	-	3	5.50
10. No Response	5	9.25	12	22.20	2	3.70	2	3.70	3	5.50
	54		54		54		54		54	

were physically alright, 18.5 per cent were physically unfit, sick, inactive and handicapped. As much as 75.85 per cent were not well (18.35%), physically unfit (11.1%), sick (29.4%), inactive (1.85%) and handicapped (12.95%). As much as (90.65%) were reported to have right relations with other inmates of the Home, while some set of respondents had friendly attitudes to other inmates. The Home functionaries found 2/3rds of the inmates labourious in terms of any productive work assigned to them.

The picture one frames of the inmates after paying a visit to the Mercy Home is that of predominantly illiterate male farmhands around 70 years of age, lonely, unwell, without an income, shorn off their poor relatives and entirely at the Mercy of the inadequate resources of the missionaries. The imposing building by the National Highway is the home of destitute human vegetables, who appeared to have totally resigned to their fate. "The impression was



grim and sombre... Life seemed to have drained from them, all but the dregs. Their stoic resignation seemed attributable not only to infirmity and old age. They were like people who had taken so much punishment that they had become inured to pain and robbed of all initiative. They had the air of not worrying much about their problems because of impossibility of sorting them out, or the difficulty of getting anyone to understand, or take notice". (Townsend, P. 1964:4). Peter Townsend's above impression of the British old age home immensely and appropriately describes the world of the inmate of the Mercy Home at Shillong.

#### Reference

Townsend, P. (1964): The Last Refuge: Routledge Kegan Paul, London.

## 11. AN OVERVIEW

There has been little focus on the societal contexts of aging due to various factors. The older individuals are frequently seen in isolation without viewing them in structural terms. With a view to positing the significance of the aged in every day-life, they must not be seen merely as a multi-variate social category, because : "The facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and failure of individual men & women. When a society is industrialised, a peasant becomes a worker, a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a business man. When classes rise and fall, a man is employed or unemployed, when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher, a store clerk, a radar man, a wife lives alone, a child grows without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (Mills, 1959:3).

Sociologists tried to see the aging phenomenon in the Western Societies in the prevailing sociological prism of structural functional theories. Three major theoretical trends in social gerontology may be identified : (1) age stratification theories propounded by Matilda W. Riley (Riley, M. W. et.al. : 1972), (2) modernising theories articulated by Donald Cowgill (Cowgill, D., 1972) and (3) role theories with their variations (Rosow, 1, 1974, Blau, Z.S. : 1981). A fourth theoretical strand of symbolic interactionism taken up by Victor Marshal and his associates (Marshal, V. : 1986) may be added to the above. Their central thrust has been emphasis on individuals actively participating in fashioning a life course.

In our view, the senior citizens interact in varied ways symbolically and participate in social situations to make sense out of numerous alternatives. We have quoted above in the Introduction the Khasi legend of the gray hag which may be taken as reflective of enchanting qualities of the old women and predicament of the old male in a matrilineal society such as the Khasis. The Khasi tribal society is undergoing a tremendous change. Apart from the demographic change, socio-economic transition is on and as much as three-fourth of the Khasis are converted to Christianity leading to a re-orientation in their world view. With spread of education and growing urbanization, blue coat, white collar and other types of jobs are available to men and women alike, who no more get attracted to the traditional mode of farming. The conventional image of idealic tribal solidarity is under a threat not from any outside agency, but from the forces and processes operating within it. The ever ready sane advice born out of life's experience is no more as relevant as in the past, because of the situational alterations. The young people do not behold



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There has been little focus on the societal contexts of aging due to various factors. The older individuals are frequently seen in isolation without viewing them in structural terms. With a view to positing the significance of the aged in every day-life, they must not be seen merely as a multi-variate social category, because : "The facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and failure of individual men & women. When a society is industrialised, a peasant becomes a worker, a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a business man. When classes rise and fall, a man is employed or unemployed, when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher, a store clerk, a radar man, a wife lives alone, a child grows without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (Mills, 1959:3).

Sociologists tried to see the aging phenomenon in the Western Societies in the prevailing sociological prism of structural functional theories. Three major theoretical trends in social gerontology may be identified : (1) age stratification theories propounded by Matilda W. Riley (Riley, M. W. et.al. : 1972), (2) modernising theories articulated by Donald Cowgill (Cowgill, D., 1972) and (3) role theories with their variations (Rosow, 1, 1974, Blau, Z.S. : 1981). A fourth theoretical strand of symbolic interactionism taken up by Victor Marshal and his associates (Marshal, V. : 1986) may be added to the above. Their central thrust has been emphasis on individuals actively participating in fashioning a life course.

In our view, the senior citizens interact in varied ways symbolically and participate in social situations to make sense out of numerous alternatives. We have quoted above in the Introduction the Khasi legend of the gray hag which may be taken as reflective of enchanting qualities of the old women and predicament of the old male in a matrilineal society such as the Khasis. The Khasi tribal society is undergoing a tremendous change. Apart from the demographic change, socio-economic transition is on and as much as three-fourth of the Khasis are converted to Christianity leading to a re-orientation in their world view. With spread of education and growing urbanization, blue coat, white collar and other types of jobs are available to men and women alike, who no more get attracted to the traditional mode of farming. The conventional image of idealic tribal solidarity is under a threat not from any outside agency, but from the forces and processes operating within it. The ever ready sane advice born out of life's experience is no more as relevant as in the past, because of the situational alterations. The young people do not behold



the older grand father's generation as their fathers did. Neither are grand parents' experience adequate enough to channelize the educated, modern and possibly westernized younger generation's enthusiasm to experiment with things novel. Thus, the old people 'feel out of place', 'too encient or out of date for the educated and fashionable world'.

Our above presentation may be summarised as :

### Summary of the Findings

1. 95 per cent respondants were scheduled Khasi Christian tribals, who were either married or widowed with a ratio of three women to two men.
2. About 85 per cent respondants stayed with their families, which were headed either by their daughters, wives, husbands or sons, who were mainly cultivators, labourers or petty Government servants with a monthly income of Rs. 2,000 per family (more than one-fourth).
3. About 40 per cent respondants had landed property, house or land and house both. 7.5 per cent wanted to work for earning, 10 per cent had retirement benefits and 80 per cent of them investments. About 20 per cent operated a bank account with a saving upto Rs. 10,000. About 30 per cent respondants had a monthly income between Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 5,000 and one-fourth of them contributed between Rs 100 to Rs. 1,000 a month to the families for their up-keep. 20 per cent could not buy food, medicine etc. for want of money.
4. Basically immobile and non-sporting, the respondants were rice and meat eaters, smoked and chewed tobacco, and were frequently hospitalized for serious cases of coughing. They spent about Rs. 50 a month on medicine and were worried for the reasons of finance and health.
5. They spent their times with their daughters, wives and grand children and discussed children's education, family and social problems, finance & health. In the matters of educating children marriage affairs and financial issues, it were the old people, who were consulted last. Two-thirds of them were actually helping their families with their support of finance, household work, advice and caring for the children. Their main worries were with finance, property, conflict and children's education.
6. The respondants were an inactive group of people, who did not belong to any club or association, read no newspaper, listened no radio, watched no television and played no indoor games.



7. They were unaware of old age pension scheme, old age home, day-care centre or hobby centres. About half of them were willing to take up social programmes such as neighbourhood watch, adult education, creche, vocational guidance, craft centre for girls and tree plantation etc. About one-fifth of them felt that the social conditions would improve in future.
8. Meghalaya spent Rs. 3.8 per person per day for the upkeep of the only old age home they have got with an income of Rs. 3.6 per person per day. The state had provision only for 0.084 per cent of its 59170 citizens above 60 years in 1981.

### **Implications for Further Research and Suggestions for Policy Making and action**

1. The functioning of the village authorities (Drbar Shnong) vis-a-vis aged persons needs to be studied.
2. Monitoring of old age pension, its utilisation, impact and extension require to be probed.
3. In view of the conventional status of outsider to the clan accorded to the Khasi old male in the matrilineal family structure, his actual contributions to household work and financial needs to be studied and his insecure status, if any, to be understood in the domestic frame work.
4. It needs to be studied as to why do the Khasi senior citizens not belong or form a club or association of their own for their entertainment, etc.
5. It is urgent that a similar study is conducted among the Garos, another significant matrilineal community of the state in its western half.
6. Possibly some more old age homes should be opened.
7. Avenues are to be examined to increase the income of the existing old age home.
8. It will be ideal to involve senior citizens in social programmes mentioned above (conclusion - 7), to which they appear to be willing and have expertise.
9. It will be ideal to explore the possibilities to weave them back to a vibrant living condition and arrest their isolation in the fast changing domestic and social relations.
10. It is time to initiate a process of planning for rehabilitation and welfare of the aged at the state level.

11. It is desirable to create a state advisory board with social workers, planners, sociologists (social scientists) and policy makers to help the Department of Welfare to function effectively as a caring set-up for the senior citizens.
12. Occasional free medical check-up and provision for the common inexpensive medicines may be arranged by the Department of Welfare through the voluntary drug stores and medical establishments.
13. A concept of medicine bank may be introduced and its feasibility may be examined.



## APPENDIX - A

### DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY NEHU, SHILLONG

(Non-Institutional)

Dear Friend,

We are conducting a study on the condition of the senior citizen in society. We value your co-operation in this regard. The information given by you will be kept in good confidence and used only for academic purpose. Kindly assist us in understanding the problems of the senior citizens. Thanking you in advance.

#### Identifying Information :

1. Name :
2. Sex : Male/Female
3. Religion : Buddhist/Christian/Hindu/Muslim/Sikh/  
Others (Specify)
4. Caste : OBC/SC/ST/Upper Caste
5. Mother Tongue :
6. Marital Status : Unmarried/Married/Divorced/Widowed/  
Separated/Deserted/Remarried.

#### Family Background

7. We would like to know some more about your family, as at present:

Sl. No.	Relationship	Age	Education	Occupation	Income PM (in Rs.)
---------	--------------	-----	-----------	------------	-----------------------

1. Self

8. Income of Occupational Change, what was your past occupation?

9. At present, are you living with your family?

1. No 2. Yes

If Yes, please (Go to Q. 13)

10. Please tell us about members in this household :

Sl. No.	Relationship with the head of household	Age	Education	Occupation	Monthly income
---------	---	-----	-----------	------------	-------------------

11. What is the nature of your relationship with the head of this household?

1. Friend 2. Relative (Please Specify) -----





How do you propose to meet this expenditure ?

## Housing

22. Let us have information about the house you live in.

(a) Is it

1. Shanty, Jhuggi-jhopri ?
2. Kachcha house ?
3. Kuchcha-pukka mixed house ?
4. Flats ?
5. Small 'Kothi'/Bungalow ?
6. Large 'Kothi'/Bungalow ?
7. Any Other.

(b) How many rooms does it have ? Number

(c) Do you have a room for your exclusive use ?

1. Yes
2. No

If No, with whom do you share it ?

(d) How this house the following facilities ?

1. Electric connection Yes/No
2. Tap-water Yes/No
3. Toilet Dry/Water/Another

23. Is this house

1. Rented/leased
2. Government accomodation
3. Owned
4. Any other

24. Is this house single storey or multistoreyed ?

1. Single storey
2. Multistoreyed

If multistoreyed, which storey do you live in ?

## Health

25. Generally speaking, do you go for morning/evening walk ?

1. Yes
2. No
3. N. A.

26. Do you play any out-door game (badminton, volley-ball, etc.)

1. No
2. Yes, occassionally (specify)
3. Yes, regularly (specify)

27. (a) Generally speaking, among the following which items came up in your daily diet ?

a. Roti/chapati	1	No	2	Yes
b. Paneer	1	No	2	Yes
c. Rice	1	No	2	Yes
d. Egg	1	No	2	Yes
e. Milk	1	No	2	Yes
f. Dal	1	No	2	Yes
g. Vegetables	1	No	2	Yes
h. Meat	1	No	2	Yes
i. Fruits	1	No	2	Yes
j. Any other	1	No	2	Yes

27. (b) Among the following which items do you use ?

(i) Bidi/Cigarette, (ii) Alcohol, (iii) Chewing tobacco

28. Are you generally satisfied with the food you take ?

Quantity	1	No	2	Yes
Quality	1	No	2	Yes

Please give details.

29. Let us talk about your physical condition. During last five years, what has been the position of
- |                         |   |           |   |           |
|-------------------------|---|-----------|---|-----------|
| Vision                  | 1 | Unchanged | 2 | Gone Down |
| Hearing                 | 1 | Unchanged | 2 | Gone Down |
| Sleep                   | 1 | Unchanged | 2 | Gone Down |
| Bone Joints (Pain)      | 1 | Unchanged | 2 | Gone Down |
| Memory                  | 1 | Unchanged | 2 | Gone Down |
| Psychomotor (Trembling) | 1 | Unchanged | 2 | Gone Down |
| Bowel Habits            | 1 | Unchanged | 2 | Gone Down |
30. (a) During last two years, have you had any of the following health complaints ?
- |                          |   |    |   |     |
|--------------------------|---|----|---|-----|
| Blood Pressure           | 1 | No | 2 | Yes |
| Prolonged Coughing       | 1 | No | 2 | Yes |
| Sugar/Diabetes           | 1 | No | 2 | Yes |
| Liver/Jaundice           | 1 | No | 2 | Yes |
| Kidney/Bladder condition | 1 | No | 2 | Yes |
| Stroke                   | 1 | No | 2 | Yes |
- (b) During last two years, have you at any time been admitted to a hospital/nursing home ?  
If Yes, please give details
- (c) Are you satisfied with the services ?
31. When needing medical assistance, where do you usually go (record exact name) ?
- |                      |                              |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Pvt. Practitioner | 2. Nursing Home              |
| 3. CGHS Dispensary   | 4. Govt. Dispansary/Hospital |
| 5. Referral Hospital | 6. Any Other (specify)       |
32. What would be the distance ? (in Km.) -----
33. Usually how much time does it take to have medical attention/treatment ?
34. Are you generally satisfied with medical attention/medicine you receive (Q. 31) ?
35. Approximately what would be your monthly expenditure on medicine ? Rs.
36. Sometimes people become much concerned with personal familial or financial issues and worry about them day and night . During last one year, has it ever happened with you ?
- |       |        |
|-------|--------|
| 1. No | 2. Yes |
|-------|--------|
- If Yes, please give details.
37. Generally at what time do you sleep ? P.M. Rise A.M.

### Social Aspests

38. (a) Among all the members of family/household, young or old, with whom do you spend most of your time ?  
(Relationship) :
- (b) Please mention common issues of conversation :
- (c) Please mention common activities :
39. (a) Among all the members of family/household, whom do you like love more ?
- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. (Relationship) | 2. (Relationship) |
|-------------------|-------------------|
- (b) Please give your reasons :
- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
|----|----|



40. (a) During last one year, what were the three main issues which adult members of the family/household approached/consulted you ?
- (i) Issue Who ?  
(ii) Issue Who ?  
(iii) Issue Who ?
- (b) Did they accept your view/opinion ? No/Yes
41. In this family/household, in the matter of education of young children, whose opinion counts most ?
1. Concerned Parents' 2. Your Own  
3. Head of the Family 4. Neighbours/Friends  
5. Others (specify)
42. In matter relating to marriage of young boys and girls, whose opinion counts most ?
1. Concerned Parents' 2. Your Own  
3. Head of the Family 4. Neighbours/Friends  
5. Others (specify)
43. In matters concerning sale or purchase of property, e.g. TV, Motor-Cycle, Plot, Flat, etc., whose opinion counts most ?
1. Concerned Parents' 2. Your Own  
3. Head of the Family 4. Neighbours/Friends  
5. Others (specify)
44. At present, are you helping members of your family/household ?
1. No 2. Yes
- If Yes, please specify, the way/manner of help -----
45. Given Occassion/Opportunity, could you be a little more helpful to the members of your family/household ?
1. No 2. Yes 3. Can't Say
- In what way, you wish to help -----
46. Some elderly are important to their family/household. What do you feel ? Please indicate your importance to your family/household ?
- In terms of realtionship, what worries you most ?
- Past-Time and Association**
47. Now let us talk about your daily routine. Would you please give us details on what did you do during your working hours the previous day ?
48. In the neighbourhood, are there persons with whom you regularly meet or are friendly ?
1. No 2. Yes
- If Yes, please give details :
1. Age : Shared Activities  
2. Age : Shared Activities  
3. Age : Shared Activities
- Are you afraid of something ? (i) Yes 1, (ii) No 2
- (a) If Yes, what is it ?  
(b) If Yes why are you afraid of ?
49. Do you read newspaper?
1. No 2. Yes, sometimes  
3. Yes, regularly 4. NA

50. Do you read megazines and books?  
 1. No 2. Yes, sometimes  
 3. Yes, regularly 4. NA
51. Do you listen to radio?  
 1. No 2. Yes, sometimes  
 3. Yes, regularly 4. NA
52. Do you watch T.V.?  
 1. No 2. Yes, sometimes  
 3. Yes, regularly 4. NA
53. Do you like any indoor game?  
 1. No 2. Yes (specify)  
 If yes, how often do you play this indoor game ?
54. Are you a member of any club in this city/village?  
 1. No 2. Yes (specify)
55. Are you a member of any organization (drama society, co-operative Society, Bhanj Mandali, etc.) in this city?  
 1. No 2. Yes (specify)

### Service for the Aged

There are many senior citizens who are need. We are anxious to have your views in this regard

56. In your views, is there anything which family groups themselves could do to help their aged?  
 1. No 2. Yes 3. No openion  
 If yes, in what way?
57. Is there anything which neighbours could do to help them?  
 1. No 2. Yes 3. No openion  
 If yes, in what way?
58. Is there anything which the aged could do to help themselves?  
 1. No 2. Yes 3. No Openion
59. Some of the aged are given old-age pension. Have you heard about it?  
 1. No 2. Yes  
 If Yes, is it adequate ?  
 1. No 2. Yes  
 If inadequate, what should be the amount?
60. In this, there are 'homes' for the aged. Do you know about them?  
 1. No 2. Yes
61. What would you suggest to limprove the affectiveness of thosehomes?  
 1. 2.
62. Insome places, day-care centres or hobby centres for the aged have been organized. Have you heard about them?  
 1. No 2. Yes
63. Would you be willing to participate on voluntary basis in the following programmes ?
- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| a. Neighbourhood watch schemes              | 1 No 2 Yes |
| b. Adult Edn. drive                         | 1 No 2 Yes |
| c. Care of infanrs of working mothers       | 1 No 2 Yes |
| d. Employment Information/guidance to youth | 1 No 2 Yes |
- 1 No 2 Yes



- e. Credit classes for young girls 1 No 2 Yes  
 f. Tree-plantation 1 No 2 Yes  
 g. Any other (specify) 1 No 2 Yes
64. What are the three main problems ( in order of priority)  
 socviety is faces today ?  
 1. 2. 3.
65. Do you think that condition/in society will improve in  
 coming years as compared with that they are today ?  
 1. Will turn worse 2. Can't say  
 3. Remain unchanged 4. Will improve  
 5. No openion
66. In terms of relationship, what worries you most ?
67. Are you afraid of some thing ?(i) Yes 1, (ii) No 2  
 (a) If yes, what is it ?  
 (b) If yes, why are you afrqaid of ?

### **Interviewer's Observations**

- (a) Physical conditions/appereance of R :  
 (b) Ailments/ diseases :  
 (c) Dress :  
 (d) R's relations with other memberrrs of family/household as  
 reported by head of family/H.H :  
 (e) R's characteristics/ qualities as repported by the head  
 of the household :  
 (f) R's is involvement in productive work, as reported by  
 the head of the household :

## APPENDIX - B

### DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY NEHU, SHILLONG

(Institutional)

Dear Friend,

We are conducting a study on the condition of the senior citizen in society. We value your co-operation in this regard. The information given by you will be kept in good confidence and used only for academic purpose. Kindly assist us in understanding the problems of the senior citizens. Thanking you in advance.

#### Identifying Information :

1. Name :
2. Sex : Male/Female
3. Religion : Buddhist/Christian/Hindu/Muslim/Sikh/  
Others (Specify)
4. Caste : OBC/SC/ST/Upper Caste
5. Mother Tongue :
6. Marital Status : Unmarried/Married/Divorced/Widowed/  
Separated/Deserted/Remarried.
7. How long have you been in this 'Home'?
8. For getting admission in this home, had you wait? Yes/No  
If Yes, how long?
9. On your behalf, had somebody approached the home or  
recommended your case. No/Yes  
If yes, Who?.....

#### Family Background

10. We would like to know some more about your family ?

Sl. No.	Relationship	Age	Education	Occupation	Income p.m. in Rs.
1.	Self				

11. If do not mind, please tell us , why have you preferred to stay in this home instead with your family ?.....

#### Economic Condition

12. Here or else where, do you own any property (e.g., land, plot, house, etc.)?

1. No
2. Yes

If yes, please give details :

- 1..... Value, Rs.....
- 2..... Value, Rs.....



**To be asked only from those Retired from a Salaried Job**

13. On your retirement, did you get any gratuity, PF, etc.?

1. No 2. Yes Rs.....

If yes, what did you do with it?

Invested : Manner..... Value Rs.

Gifted : Manner..... Value, Rs.

14. Are you a recipient of old-age pension ? No/Yes

If yes, how much? Rs.....

What do you do with it?

15. This apart, do you have a bank account ?

1. No 2. Yes

If yes, approximately what would be the balance? Rs.....

16. Take together, what would be your average monthly income?

Paid work in the home .....

Pension, if any Rs .....

From children/

Grand-children Rs .....

Investment (Q.13) Rs.....

Bank Interest(Q.15) Rs.....

Any other sources(specify) Rs.....

17. Do you pay to the home for your maintenance?

1. No 2. Yes

If yes, what is the monthly payment ?Rs.....

Source?.....

18. This apart, do you spend any money on clothes, soap, medicine, etc.? No/Yes

If yes, on what? (specify)

Source?

19. Are there any other items of expenditure which are helped up for want of money?

1. No 2. Yes

If yes, please give details :.....

How much expenditure will it involve ? Rs.....

How do you propose to meet this expenditure ?.....

**Health**

20. Generally speaking, do you go for morning/evening walk?

1. No 2. Yes 3. NA

21. Do you play any outdoor games (badminton, Volley-ball, etc.)

1. No 2. Yes, occasionally

3. Yes, regularly

22. (a) Generally speaking, among the following which items come up in your daily diet ?

(a) Roty/Chapati 1 No 2 Yes

(b) Paneer 1 No 2 Yes

(c) Rice 1 No 2 Yes

(d) Egg 1 No 2 Yes

(e) Dal 1 No 2 Yes

(f) Milk 1 No 2 Yes

(g) Meat 1 No 2 Yes

(h) Vegetables 1 No 2 Yes

- (i) Fruits 1 No 2 Yes  
 (j) Any other 1 No 2 Yes  
 (b) Among the following which items do you use ?  
 (a) Bidi/ cigarette 1 No 2 Yes  
 (b) Alcohol 1 No 2 Yes  
 (c) Chewing tobacco 1 No 2 Yes  
 23. Are you generally satisfied with the food you are provided in the home ?  
 Quantity : 1 No 2 Yes  
 Quality : 1 No 2 Yes

Please give details : .....

24. Let us talk about your physical conditions. During last five years, what has been the position of.....

Vision	1 Unchanged	2 Gone down
Hearing	1 Unchanged	2 Gone down
Sleep	1 Unchanged	2 Gone down
Bone Joints (pain)	1 Unchanged	2 Gone down
Memory	1 Unchanged	2 Gone down
Psychomotor (trembling)	1 Unchanged	2 Gone down
Bowl habits	1 Unchanged	2 Gone down

(any other specify)

25. (a) During last two years, had you had any of the following health complaints :

Blood pressure	1	No	2	Yes
Prolonged Coughing	1	No	2	Yes
Sugar/Diabetes	1	No	2	Yes
Liver/Jaundice	1	No	2	Yes
Kidney/Bladder condition	1	No	2	Yes
Stroke	1	No	2	Yes
Any other	1	No	2	Yes

25. (b) During last two years, have you at any time been admitted to a hospital/nursing home?

1. No 2. Yes

If yes, please give details.....

26. Are you satisfied with the services?.....

26. Sometimes people become much concerned with personal financial or domestic problems and worry about them day and night. During last one year, has it ever happened with you?

1. No 2. Yes

If yes, please give details.....

27. Generally at what time do you sleep .... p.m., rise...a.m.

### Facilities in the home

28. In this home what type of accommodation do you have?

1. Exclusive room, floor area.....sqm.
2. Shared room, average floor area.....sqm.
3. Dormitory, average floor area.....sqm.
4. Any other type.....

29. What do you think about bedding?

1. Adequate 2. Inadequate

If inadequate, in what way? .....



30. Do you get medicines when you need them ?  
 1. Never 2. Sometimes 3. Always
31. How many times a week physician/doctor visits this home?.....
32. Do you think that the doctor is competent in diagnosis and treatment?
33. And do you think that the doctor pays due attention to patients?
34. When a resident in this home is upset, anxious or nervous, is he/she consoled or counselled ?  
 1 No 2 Yes
- If yes, who does this?.....
- Is it helpful?.....

### Programme Activities

35. Also, it has arrangements for newspapers, magazines, etc. Do they read?
37. Do you listen to radio?  
 1. No 2. Sometimes 3. Regularly
38. Do you watch television?  
 1. No 2. Sometimes 3. Regularly
39. It runs literary/adult education/continuing education classes. Do you participate in it? No/Yes  
 If yes, in what way? ..... learner.....teacher.
40. Do you think that the residents really want to learn?  
 1. No 2. Some of them 3. Most of them
41. This home runs craft (name crafts) classes. Do you participate in them? No/Yes  
 If yes, in what way? ..... trainee,.....teacher.  
 Do you get any remuneration for your work?  
 During the last month, how much money did you earn?
42. Do you think that the residents really want to learn craft and earn?
43. This home often organises special functions. Did you participate in the last (name the function) function?  
 No/Yes  
 If yes, in what way?....audience,...active participant.
44. There is arrangement for indoor games (name the games). Do you participate in them?  
 45. Do you know that the home organise outings/picnics for residents? No/Yes  
 If yes, during last one year, how many times?.....  
 Did you participate? How many times?.....

### Interpersonal Relationship

47. In some places, residents are friendly-type and in others lonely-type. How about this home? Would you say that residents are.....  
 1. Lonely-type  
 2. Friendly-type
- If friendly-type, what proportion?  
 1. Some of them friendly.  
 2. Most of them friendly.

48. In this home what are the activities the residents enjoy most doing together?
49. Do the residents in this home disagree with each other?  
No/Yes  
If yes, how often?  
Has it happened during the last six months?  
what was the issue?
50. Do the residents quarrel with each other? No/Yes  
If yes, how often?  
Has it happened during last six months?  
What was the issue  
What was the out come?
51. Mind telling us, who is the resident in this home with whom you are most friendly?  
Please describe an aspect/occurrence which show your friend's qualities?
52. Are there other in the home with whom you are friendly?  
If yes, what are your common activities?

### OF FUNCTIONARIES

53. Among the following, which three qualities are prominent in superintendent/director/incharge of this home (in order of priority)  
... duty conscious... interested in residents welfare...  
... bossist, ... sympathetic to residents, indifferent to his/her work... honest, unmindful of residents problem.
54. Do workers/functionaries spend much of their working time with inmate of the home during their work?
55. Among all the workers/functionaries in this Home, who do you like most?  
..... designation.  
Please give three reasons (in order of priority)  
1. .... 2. ....  
3. ....
56. Similarly among them, is there anyone whom you like least?  
1. No 2. Yes  
Please give three reasons of your dislike (in order of priority)  
1. .... 2. .... 3. ....

### Service for the Aged

- here are many senior citizens who are needy.  
We are anxious to have your views in this regard.
57. In your view, is there any thing which family groups themselves could do to help their aged?  
1. No 2. Yes, in what way? 3. No opinion
58. Is there anything which neighbours could do to help them?  
1. No 2. Yes 3. No opinion.  
If yes in what way?
59. Is there anything which the age could do to help themselves?



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