

TRANSHUMANTS

OF

ARUNACHAL HIMALAYAS

THE PANGCHENPAS AND
THE THINGBUPAS
OF TAWANG DISTRICT

BIBHASH DHAR

About the book

The state of Arunachal Pradesh is the repository of diversities. One can observe the diversities in terms of geographical variegations as well as socio-cultural norms and practices. The state attracts a lot of interest in the anthropological research as it is the mosaic of colourful tribal cultures with the different oral histories of migration, diversified traditional economics, varieties of spoken languages, religious observances of both indigenous and introduced religions and the material cultures. Generally speaking, the people are largely agriculturists but many of them are expert caravan borne traders carried out through the mountain passes, some are pastoralists while some of the small groups of people in the high altitude peripheral regions earn their bread through the specialized pastoralism, known as transhumance. The anthropological world has little or no information about the presence of the transhumant communities in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. It happened largely due to the extreme remoteness of the habitats of the transhumant groups. The economy of transhumance belongs to the old world and is not common in the conglomeration of the states of the region known as the North East India. Till date four such communities have been discovered in the Tawang district of the state, namely, Pangchenpa, Thingbupa, Magopa and the Luguthanpa who lead a life of isolation in the territory of their own. It is for information that no study has been ever conducted on these small and least known communities. People in the district headquarter town of Tawang have only a borderline and unverifiable information on the communities as they seldom come down to Tawang. Here is a result of painstaking research on the Pangchenpas and Thingbupas in their original habitats in the snow bound and inaccessible areas in a systematic way while the other two are still untouched mainly because of inaccessibility.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Bibhash Dhar, M.Sc. Ph.D., born in 1954, has obtained his Master's degree in Anthropology from the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, Guwahati in 1975 and Ph. D. from Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh in 1993. He started his carrier in anthropology in 1976 as a Research Assistant in the project Tribal Unrest and Inter-Ethnic Tensions in N.E. India, formulated and executed by the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, Guwahati, sponsored by the Anthropological Survey of India, Government of India, Calcutta. In 1978, he joined the Directorate of Research, Government of Arunachal Pradesh as Assistant Research Officer and was posted at Bomdila in the West Kameng district of the state. He extensively toured the Monpa habitats of Kalaktang, Dirang and Tawang in the western Arunachal Pradesh. He has experience of working among the tribal communities in the East Siang, West Siang, Upper Siang and Lower Subansiri districts of the state. In 1980 Dr Dhar joined the Anthropological Survey of India, Government of India and was posted at Port Blair in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and worked among the Onges of the Little Andamans and also in the urban situation at Port Blair. He has also worked among the Abuj Marias of the Bastar District during his tenure of posting at Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh. Dr. Dhar is presently posted at the North East Regional Centre of the Survey at Shillong, Meghalaya as an Anthropologist. He has three books and about thirty-five research papers to his credit published in Indian and Foreign journals of repute. He is also associated with a few scientific institutions and organizations.

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	.....	v
<i>Preface</i>	.....	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	.....	x
<i>List of Photographs</i>	.....	xii
<i>List of Maps</i>	.....	xii
Chapter 1	.....	15
Introduction		
Chapter 2	.....	55
The Pangchenpa		
Chapter 3	.....	123
The Thingbupa		
Chapter 4	.....	165
Summary and Conclusion		
<i>References</i>	.....	199
<i>Glossary</i>	.....	206
<i>Appendices</i>	.....	214
<i>Indices</i>	.....	217



INTRODUCTION

The Himalayas have attracted innumerable great saints and sages for prolonged meditation on its lap amid its picturesque, pious and peaceful locations by the banks of splashing and roaring mountain rivers and rivulets. A number of Hindu mythological and ancient literatures have been written in various languages that describe many of the communities that hitherto made the Himalayan valleys their habitats. There is a belief that most of the Hindu gods and goddesses since time immemorial have made the Himalayas their abode. It is true that our knowledge of the large portion of the Himalayas is far from complete.

This young mountain range, the Himalayas, could be broadly divided into three regions, namely, the Central Himalayas, the Western Himalayas and the Eastern Himalayas. The Eastern Himalayas include the high-rise sierra of Bhutan, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and the other states of the northeastern region. However, most of the Central and the Western Himalayas have been largely studied and described in the past years by the various adventurers, mountaineers and through the travelogues, published from time to time. The Central and the Western Himalayan regions have also attracted a number of life scientists to study the exotic flora and fauna. The anthropologists too have studied the diverse group of communities in these regions and made them known to the world at large. A good number of transhumant communities have also been studied by a number of Indian and foreign scholars in the later half of the last century. In this context Bhasin (1996:11) observed, "Several studies have been carried out on transhumant groups in different parts of Western Himalayas (Singh, 1964; Newell, 1967; Khatana, 1976; Nitzberg, 1970, 1978; Goldstein and Masserschmidt, 1980; Kango and Dhar, 1981; Rao and Casimir, 1982; Bhasin, 1988) mainly focusing on nomadic routes, regular seasonal movements in a typical landscape, agriculture and human settlements. The Eastern Himalayas is still, mostly, an obscure and quite an unknown cluster of sierra to the modern world. Anthropologists are yet to initiate research activities in the high altitude regions of the state of Arunachal Pradesh, which may as well be termed as the Arunachal Himalayas. Hardly any literature is available on the inhabitants of the MacMohan Line of the state. It may be mentioned that the MacMohan Line is an imaginary line drawn to demarcate the Sino-Indian border. Only information

available, that too enigmatic in nature, is that there are four numerically small tribal communities with the economy of animal herding in the hitherto unknown and isolated mountain range near the MacMohan Line in the district of Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. Anthropological study of highland population in Arunachal Pradesh in terms of their unique cultural adaptation to a multitude of cultural zones in the Himalayan environment is still in its infancy. The anthropological world has no information about the migration, the population size, their demography, economy, language, religion, socio-political systems, socio-cultural lifestyle of the communities in their present habitat and other norms as no systematic study has been ever conducted among the people. The present study has been thus designed to portray the lifestyles of the tribal communities of small populations by making repeated and complimentary observations.

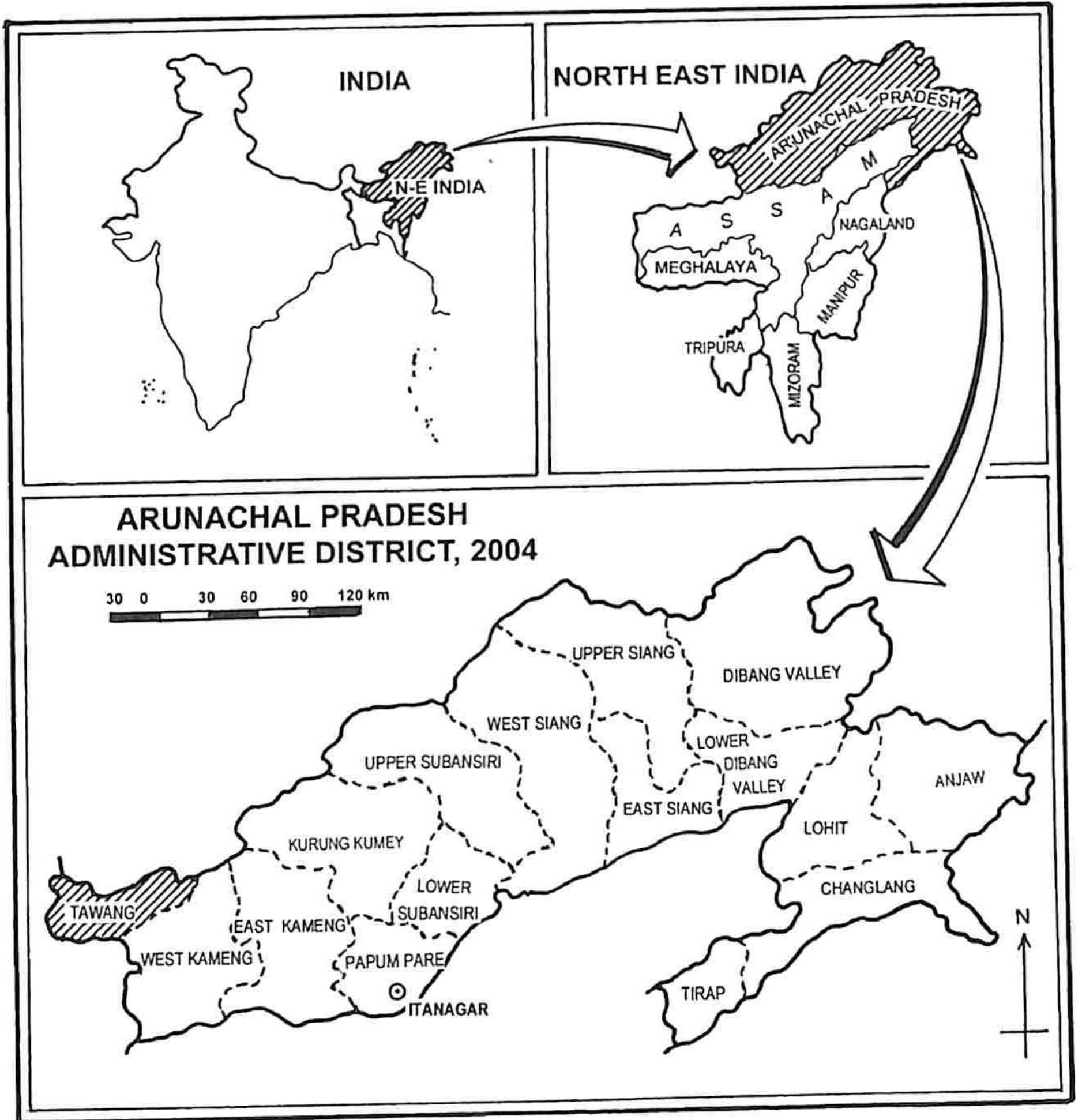
The 83,578 square kilometers of land guarding the international borders is the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The state lies between latitude $26^{\circ} 28'$ and $29^{\circ} 30' N$ and between $91^{\circ} 30'$ and $97^{\circ} 30' E$ longitude. It is the largest state in terms of area among the seven states that form the geographical region known as the North East region of the Republic of India. Though Arunachal Pradesh occupies the biggest geographical area among the states of the North East India but it has the smallest population density not only in the region but also in the context of the whole country. It is 13 persons per square kilometre. The state is strategically located as it borders with China (Tibet) to its north, the country of Myanmar to its east, the mountain kingdom of Bhutan to its west while on the south is the state of Assam and Nagaland. As the name implies, the snow-covered peaks of Arunachal Pradesh announces dawn

for the whole country as it receives the first sun light in the morning. All the five major tributaries of the mighty river system, known as the Brahmaputra slope down to the plains of Assam after flowing exclusively through the mountains of the state. Arunachal Pradesh is blessed with the diverse geographical variations as there are the tropical rain forests in the foothill regions followed by the temperate vegetation in the mid-altitudes and a canopy of alpine coverage in the regions near perennial snow, dotted with mountain grasslands where the grass appears during the brief summer. Complying with the natural diversities the state has a variegated population of about twenty-five major tribesmen group divided into a number of sub-tribes with their diverse socio-culturo-religious norms and beliefs. The Monpas and the Sherdukpens whose habitats are on the mountains on the westernmost part of the state are the believers in the Tibetan Lamaist type of Buddhism while the Hrussos (Aka), Mijis (Sajolang or Dmmai), Bangnis, Nishis, Adis and the other tribes of the central region of the state largely believe in their traditional faith of sun and moon gods known as the *Donyi-Polo*. However, a section of the Hrussos have expressed their faith in *Vaishnavism*, associated with the *Nikamul Satra* of Tezpur, a *Vaishnavite* centre in the north bank of Brahmaputra in Assam. In the recent past a division of the Noctes, on the eastern part of the state were reported to be the believers of *Vaishnavism* but today the scenario has changed and many of them are Christians. Christianity has also made quite an inroad among the tribal communities on the east and central part of the state. Diversities are noticed in the patterns of house building including the materials used since the traditional period. In the western highlands the houses are built of stone and mud and are mostly double storied with roofs of wooden planks with

fire-places at the centre that keep them warm during the chilly winter while the people of the lower altitudes build their houses of bamboo and thatch on raised platforms. This is because the weather in such submontane region is relatively hot and humid and the materials such as bamboo and thatch is available in their close vicinity. Secondly, as the people since time immemorial have been ingeniously constructing their houses on raised platforms, are largely able to keep away the various reptiles, pest and other insects that are common in the area. Languages of the people of the state are not uniform and differ from tribe to tribe. Variation is also noticed in the economy of the tribal groups. It ranges from slash and burn to terrace cultivation, from gravitationally irrigated plots to permanent cultivable plots, from long distance caravan trade through mountain passes to horticulture and from simple animal herding to transhumance in high altitudes where the quality of soil do not support domestication of grain plants.

As the history goes, at the very initial stage of taking over the control of Assam, which included the present day Arunachal Pradesh, from the Ahom kings, the officials of the British-India Government showed minimum interest to introduce any sort of administration in the mountainous tracts. In this context Shastri (1974:35) observed, "In 1838 when the British took over the control of Assam from the last Ahom king they neither had the time nor the interest to introduce any sort of administration in the north east frontier region. For about a century since 1838 Britishers remained content with protecting the plains areas from the occasional raids by the tribal people from the hills and taking out few punitive expeditions into the hills..." The beginning of the administration in the mountainous tract of the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), presently known

as Arunachal Pradesh, can be traced back to 1914 when the Assam Frontier Tract Regulation was promulgated. In this context Luthra (1971:9) observed, "The beginning of administration of the territory, which has come to be known as the North East Frontier Agency, may be traced back to the Government of India (British-India), Foreign and Political Department, Notification of 1914, when the region came to be known as the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) which promulgated that the Assam Frontier Tracts Regulation of 1880 would extend to the hills inhabited or frequented by *Abors, Miris, Mishmis, Singphos, Nagas, Khamptis, Bhutias, Akas, and Daflas.*" It may be mentioned here that the above nomenclatures are old and wrongly addressed names of the tribes of the region. *Abors* are now known as the *Adis*, *Bhutia* stands for the *Monpas* and *Sherdukpens* of the *Tawang* and the *West Kameng* districts and the *Membas* and the *Khambas* of *West Siang* region. The *Daflas* are now known as the *Bangnis, Nishis* or *Nishangs* and are found in the districts of *East Kameng* and *Lower Subansiri* of the state. However, after India attained Independence and having passed through many phases the administrative machinery of NEFA was streamlined in 1965 by forming five districts, namely, *Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit* and *Tirap* after the five rivers that flow down through the respective districts to join *Brahmaputra* in the state of *Assam*. On January 21, 1972, NEFA was declared as a Union Territory with the novel nomenclature of *Arunachal Pradesh* and on the February 20, 1987 the Union Territory of *Arunachal Pradesh* was declared as a full-fledged state. Subsequently, the five districts were further sub-divided and at present there are sixteen districts, namely, *Tawang, West Kameng, East Kameng, Lower Subansiri, Upper Subansiri, Papum Pare, Kurum Kumey, East*



Map 1. Location Map of Arunachal Pradesh

Siang, West Siang, Upper Siang, Lower Dibang Valley, Dibang Valley, Lohit, Changlang, Tirap and Anjaw.

The author had the opportunity to conduct anthropological field investigations on a number of tribes in the western highlands of the state since 1978 as he had the opportunity to work as a Assistant Research Officer in the Directorate of Research, Government of Arunachal Pradesh and was posted at Bomdila, the district headquarter town of the West Kameng district. In those days the present Tawang district was an administrative sub-division of the district of West Kameng. The sub-division of Tawang was declared a district only on the 6 October, 1984. Nevertheless, since those days, the author was aware of the presence of a few numbers of numerically small populations somewhere in the obscure and inaccessible high terrains on the northern and the western part of the Tawang district in the forward areas bordering China (Tibet) and Bhutan. Moreover, the Monpas, the major tribesmen of the western part of the state had minimum or imaginary information on the least known communities. The district of Tawang has a geographical area of 9,394 square kilometre and the density of population is 6 persons per square kilometers (1971). As per the Census of India, (1971) the population of the Tawang sub-division was 18,754. Out of this, the number of scheduled tribe was 15,980. The Tawang district is strategically located as it borders with China (Tibet) on the north, Bhutan on its west and partly on its south while on the east is the West Kameng district of the state. The district headquarter town of the Tawang district is also known as Tawang. The western part of Arunachal Pradesh came into limelight after the Sino-Indian border conflict of 1962. It is after 1962 that an all-weather border highway linking Tawang

with Tezpur in Assam as well as with the rest of the country was constructed by the Border Roads Task Force (BRTF) and the project is named as *Vartak*. This winding highway passes through Sela, a mountain pass at 14,000 feet above the mean sea level that remains under cover of perennial snow. The journey from Tezpur to Tawang is thoroughly enjoyable as it passes through the pristine and variegated natural wonders. Even long before the construction of the highway and since the pre-independence period Tawang was much known to the people of the Himalayas and to the communities in the foothill regions of Assam as through the Tawang tract passed the all important and traditional caravan trade route connecting Tibet with the foothill markets in the plains of Assam, such as, Udalguri, Daimara, Lokra and Sadiya. In all these places the traders used to assemble with various products from different parts of eastern India during the annual fairs that were held in the winters. Tawang was much known to the Buddhist world even before the independence of India because of the presence of the famous Tibetan-Buddhist monastery at Tawang belonging to the *Gelukpa* sect that was constructed sometimes in the seventeenth century (Nanda:1982, Rahul:1971) This majestic monastery till today is considered as one of the functional monasteries of its kind in the whole of the Himalayas. It has a capacity to accommodate five hundred novices to be trained to pass through a few orders to achieve the grade of *Lama* to finally attain the eligibility for performing the various Tibetan-Buddhist rites independently. The Monpas are the major tribesmen group of the Tawang district and made their presence felt in this part of the Himalayas as one of the most enterprising tribes of the region who used to carry out long distance trans-Himalayan caravan borne trade of indigenous items since the

long past. It can thus be taken for granted that the Monpas interacted with a variety of communities in the mountains and in the plains of Assam because of their involvements in connection with the caravan-borne trade and their visits to the various Buddhist shrines and monasteries as they started to convert themselves to the faith of Buddhism since the eighth century. It was hence thought that the Monpas were in a position to provide some basic information on the least known and numerically small populations living in the isolated mountain ranges in the district of Tawang. Surprisingly, the people could not supply with much information on these least known populations but importantly they could provide with the correct names of the communities. They are the Pangchenpa, the Thingbupa, the Luguthangpa and the Magopa (Map 2). Information provided about the least known communities was so imaginary that people even were not hesitant to mention that cultivation among the Thingbupas was a taboo! Quite a similar observation was also made by Nanda (1982:4) while she was posted as an Assistant Commissioner who served the Tawang sub-division in the recent past. It is evident from the following observation, "Cultivation is almost a taboo in the area — perhaps the traditional way of preserving available land for grazing." On close examination, it, however, seems that she has used 'taboo' in a wider sense because it has been found during the field investigation at Thingbu that the soil which is relatively unfertile does not support agriculture in spite of the sincere efforts put in by the people. It was observed that every year people sow the seeds of buckwheat by erecting proper wooden enclosures to keep away the yaks and sheep that stray around, but, finally most patches of land give them only grass as gift that serve as fodder for their domesticated animals to be used during the harsh and prolonged winter.

However, after holding much discussion with the cross section of the Monpas, members of the other communities and the administrative machinery of Tawang district it could be ascertained that all the four communities are animal herders and their habitats are located in the largely inaccessible mountain ranges near the Sino-Indian border in the Zemithang and the Thingbu areas of the district. Incidentally, it was the only information that could be gathered through casual discussions with a cross-section of the population of Tawang, basing on which the initial attempt was made to chalk out a guideline of the present work. It is thus presumed that the people move with their herds and flocks from one mountain pasture to another, higher and higher taking advantage of the suitability of the natural environment that help the luxuriant growth of grass with change of season and return to their permanent villages, stage by stage, following the same route, with the approach of winter when the surroundings become bleak and unbearable.

As because the habitats of all of these communities are located on unknown and cold regions thus it was thought that, the anthropological field investigations can only be carried out during the short summer that starts from the end of April to August. Nevertheless, the major obstacle towards, undertaking field investigation is that during the summer these communities are not expected to be found in their respective villages but would migrate with their herds and flocks in the various mountain pastures which are even more inaccessible and more importantly the terrain was totally unknown to the author. Finally, as there were no other options, it was decided that the field investigation could be undertaken in the summer months and

to try fortune to meet the people before they move out with their herds for pastures abandoning their villages temporarily. Hence, the time of the field investigation can be only for a month at the most, in May. It is amid these constraints that it was thought to undertake investigations and attempt to understand their economy, socio-cultural life, political organization, material culture, ritual and belief, but, the main force in the present work is to collect sufficient information on the subject of transhumance, which is the primary economy of all the four communities mentioned. It is interesting because in the Northeast region of India there are no information or any study on the subject of transhumance as because no such community could be identified with the primary economy of transhumance. The present work is the first of its kind in the region. The author could reach the habitats of only two communities after much effort, namely, the Pangchenpas and the Thingbupas, while the other two could not be reached as those locations are yet remote and inaccessible.

PASTORALISM, ECOLOGY AND CULTURE

Among the innumerable organisms nurtured by the nature man is the most significant. Through his culture and skill he is able to meet and solve most of the environmental problems around him. He subsequently tames and ultimately controls his given environment. In the context of man and his immediate environment, Krader (1963) has stressed on man's symbiotic relationship with some of the living beings on the one hand while on the other hand he found that man is even parasite on other living beings. In this context, Krader (1963:6) observed, "Man is symbiotic with some living things, parasite upon other living things. He is symbiotic with his symbiotes

and a hunter among his prey". Krader (1963) has substantiated his observation by mentioning that man in the role of hunter or fisher is a parasite because he does nothing about his source of subsistence. He does not replenish the stocks he lives upon. Man's role as a farmer, however, is true symbiotic. He harvests the crops for his food but subsequently he plants, weeds, waters and uses fertilizers to raise them again. Midway between the hunters and farmers is the herdsman. In certain senses he is a parasite, in others he is a symbiote. The animals he raises eat the grass; the herdsman does not replenish it. The animal dung is collected for fuel. Herdsman and herds are thus parasite on grass. On the other hand, the herdsman maintains the herds which support him. He does not kill his herds; although occasionally he slaughters a sheep or goat for a feast. He usually "farms" the herd without diminishing it. The milk of herd is his principal food and item of trade in various forms. He thus protects them from wolves and other predatory animals; he builds windbreaks for them against the blizzards of winter; he helps cows to calve and ewes teat their lambs. The herdsman lives with his herds as symbiotically as the farmer with his plant crops. And both herdsman and herd are, as we have seen, are parasites on the grass.

Nothing could perhaps, be clearly said about the period of origin of stockbreeding. This is mainly because the artifacts used by the pastoral people were largely made of animal hides that were lighter in weight to enable the people to carry easily as they used to remain mobile from one pasture to another. Leather vessels, artifacts made of wood and baskets that were largely in use have little chance of surviving as all of these are perishable materials, as a result the archaeologists could not excavate these materials to recognize their presence.

This, however, does not mean that the economy of pastoralism did not exist in the past. In this context Childe (1970:81) observed, “The failure to recognize prehistoric settlement sites or groups of relics belonging to pure pastoralists is not in itself any proof that such did not exist.” The pastoral people preferred to live in tents and mostly remained mobile with the light weight unbreakable utensils and artifacts along with their flocks and herds of domesticated animals in search of greener meadows round the year with the change of season. The pastoralists used to drive the animals towards those places where suitable pastures and water was available. They also used to remain alert to ward off the carnivorous animals that threatened to attack their flocks after the nightfall. Lauwerys (1969:50) in this context further observed, “ The original centre was the Near and Middle East – the region now occupied by Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Iran. At that time many of the areas that now consist of scrub and semi-desert were covered by grassland and forests. It is impossible to determine which animals were the first to be herded, though it is reasonable to suppose that they were the ancestors of modern sheep and cattle. Excavations at Jarmo, in Iraq, which had a flourishing community about 9000 years ago, have yielded the bones of sheep (or possibly goats), oxen, pigs and dogs, all of which are believed to have been domesticated by that time.” Lauwerys (1969) while working on pastoralism made a distinction between domestication and simple herding. According to him driving the animals about their pasture, using them for milk, fur, wool and eventually killing them for their meat bones and so on is simple herding. Domestication embraces all these things but also includes the continuous process of breeding the animals in captivity; later, as the art

developed, breeding involved the preferential selection of certain individual in flock or herd so as to perpetuate qualities that were desirable to the herdsman but were not advantageous to the survival of the animals in the wild. In this and other ways did such animals, individually and collectively, come to depend more and more on their association with man.

The oldest food-producing settlements, as examined by the archaeologists in Europe, Asia and Africa, as observed by Childe (1970:76), were of the opinion that in addition to the cultivation of cereals, animals were reared for food. The experts were further of the opinion that the people used to rear horned cattle, sheep, goat and swine and the economy was the characteristic of Neolithic age. Childe (1970) named the *Neolithic*, much popularly, a revolution. Such a nomenclature to the age was given because it is believed to have opened doors to a total new way of life. People produced food by cultivation of cereals and also domesticated animals. This in turn helped people to gain strength and confidence of being less dependent upon the freaks of nature and also learnt to live in clusters in more or less permanent settlements. There are evidences of experimentation with the domestication of animals in the Mesolithic period too. The economy was in developing stage in some of the favoured spots and one of such was in Palestine where a culture called Natufian developed. Many of the tools in the Natufian sites consisted of small blades set in straight handles. These were certainly used to cut grass or grain as they possessed a characteristic sheen that generally developed on stones so used (Beals et al: 1977)

In the early period, the practice of animal herding was launched in relatively arid and semi-arid regions in the northern part of Africa and extended up to the central region of Asia.

Perhaps, the major centres of pastoralism in the remote past were the foothills and the upland valleys around Mesopotamia and the highlands of Lebanon and Palestine. It is presumed that these animal herders also used to cultivate certain cereals, but at the same time, it is beyond denial that there were human populations that lived on pure pastoralism too. Childe (1970:81) in the above context observed, "From this it is no far cry to a pure pastoral economy in which cultivation plays a negligible role. Pure pastoral nomadism is familiar and is illustrated by the several peoples in the Old World; the Bedouin of Arabia and the Mongolian tribes of Central Asia are the best examples." Pure pastoral nomads are in a better and advantageous position compared to the cultivators. They are not dependent on the climatic conditions as the agricultural communities are. On being felt torrid with the rise of temperature in high summers the pastoral people are at liberty to move out with their flocks to a better-suited climatic region along with a few of their family members to take care of the herds. Some of the scholars are, however, of the opinion that though the economy of pastoralism has been separated from agriculture, still, the pastoral people are some way or other dependent upon food grain cultivation. Beals et. al (1977: 295) in the above context expressed, "Although pastoralism was at one time regarded as an adaptation quite distinct from the cultivation of plants, most pastoralists appear to be dependent in one way or another upon plant cultivation." It has been observed that the population that are dependent on transhumance put in full effort for at least some production of cereals but due to the poor quality of soil and because of their movement from one grassland to another, their indefatigable efforts go in vain but the people keep repeating their futile attempts every year. In the drier belts

of Africa the pastoral nomads are known to undertake some casual type of grain cultivation, especially on the dry river beds, while they move from one location to the other with their cattle. They reap the harvest on their return journey and such type of casual type of cultivation requires minimum workforce and physical labour. Hjort (1981:137) while working on some such communities in Africa, perhaps, correctly coined such type of grain cultivation by the nomadic pastoralists as 'take-a-chance' type of cultivation. He tried to justify the term as he found that the pastoralists of the drier areas of Africa usually take casual chances to produce grains in the dried up riverbeds. Evans-Pritchard (1940) cited another example of casual cultivation from the Nuers of Africa. The Nuers represent a people entirely dedicated to raising of cattle but reluctantly engaged in fishing or agriculture. A few scholars working on the pastoralists are also of the opinion that the pastoralists are in an advantageous position compared to the agriculturists as they can rear their herds in any part of the country and do not require fertile land for doing so. Secondly, as has been already mentioned, they can move out to relatively comfortable climatic zones to avoid extreme heat or cold. In this context Levinson (1947:159) observed, "Compared to the agriculturists, the pastoralists enjoy the advantage of having a mobile and expandable resource—their herds—while agriculturists cannot simply move their fields in times of drought or flood or easily acquire additional land." Pure pastoralism largely developed in the deserts, grasslands, savannas and steep mountains that do not traditionally support agriculture. In the context of the people who practiced agriculture Lauwerys (1969:53) noted, ".....agricultural man is the greatest destroyer of forests". Lauwerys (1969:52) further in the context of forest cover

observed, “When tribal groups began to herd livestock, vast areas of the great northern continents were covered with dense forest; indeed, even in Julius Caesar’s day Roman legionaries took several weeks to march through the huge forests of southern Germany. Even the countries of the Near East were heavily wooded in parts, notably with cedar forests.”

Human beings, as already mentioned, are better known to adapt themselves to the given environmental conditions and thus pastoral societies were founded in the East and North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, Siberia and the southern Europe. In the East Africa cattle are commonly raised, camels and sheep are reared in North Africa and the Middle East; reindeer in the Scandinavia and Siberia, sheep in Europe and goat, horses sheep and mixed cattle are mastered in Central Asia. Yaks are raised and herded in the Himalayas while the llamas in the Peruvian Andes.

In the context of the technology required by the pastoral people, Levinson (1947:159) observed, “From the viewpoint of technology pastoralism requires a number of specialized activities such as regulating the herd size, moving the herd, training herds and harvesting food and other products. Pastoralism also requires special tools, equipments, knowledge and skills. The yak and sheep herders of Tibet, for example, make the use of knives, ropes, spears, milking hooks and pails, hobbles, cattle pens, sheepfold, stalls, fetters, tethers and various receptacles not needed in non-pastoral societies”. Levinson (1947:158) also categorized the economy of pastoralism into three – settled, nomadic and agro-pastoralism. Settled pastoralism is characterized by residence in permanent villages with some of the residents tending the herds or flocks in natural pastures. For example, shepherders in Sardinia, Italy, tend the

flocks while most pastoral Sardinians reside in villages. In agro-pastoralism some members of the community grow crops while others tend the herds. The Nuer of Sudan, for example, subsisted traditionally on a combination of millet farming, fishing and herding of cattle. Similarly, nomadic Bedouin often plant grain along their routes for harvest upon their return. The third type of pastoralism is the nomadic type where the pastoralists move frequently in search of water and vegetation for their herds. The nomadic sections of the Masai composed of extended families, for example, would migrate at virtually any time with little notice, abandoning their huts and villages for others to occupy. This particular form of nomadic pastoralism is transhumance that involves regular seasonal movement for better pasturage. Pastoralism, thus, involves a wide mix of strategies for exploiting a limited environment with considerable variation. Krader (1963), however opined that the transhumants and the nomadic shepherds are not the same. Krader's observation, thus, contradicts to that of Levinson (1947:158) wherein he equated nomadic pastoralism with transhumance. Though Krader (1963) disagreed to equate transhumance and nomadic partoralism but he could not clearly draw a line between the two. Following observation made by Krader (1963:24) may be thus examined. "I observed the activities of shepherds with flocks in seasonal round, living in tents while away from their home villages in the fall of 1956 in Uzbekistan. These were transhumants and not nomadic shepherds; they returned seasonally to a fixed permanent base." In the above context Swayam (2004) expressed that nomadism and pastoralism are not very different terms. The term 'nomad' has been derived from the Greek term 'nemo' which means to pasture (Swayam:2004). It may as well be contradicted as all

nomads are not necessarily pastoralists and for example the gypsies of Europe who prefer to identify them as European travellers today may be sighted.

The communities that are dependent on pure pastoralism must have a few other communities in their vicinity with agricultural economy and both the economic groups develop a positive bond complementary to each other in their own interest of survival. The agriculturists need pastoral products and the pastoralists require the food grains for their day-to-day use and survival through which a symbiotic relationship develops. Slowly, the relationship may be transformed into a bond that would connect several ethnic groups in an encompassing social system, giving rise to a situation of complementarity. There are quite a few types of symbiotic relationships that exist between the pastoral and the neighbouring agricultural communities. Such agreements also exist between the relatively wealthy and the impoverished pastoral groups. Under such agreements, the insolvent transhumant people herd the animals of the well-to-do pastoral groups on a yearly payment against each animal. In this context Maiti (1994:125) sighted, "Bakarwals take sheep, goats and horses from other communities on yearly contract basis. Under such contract they will get 100 rupees per year for each animal and also they get half of the product of the animal if it is female. After periodic return they hand over the animals to the individual owners and if possible they again make contract for the coming year."

Complementary behaviours are observed between the pastoralists and their agrarian neighbours. Pastoral groups, as a general norm, are found to survive in the marginalized regions where agriculture is largely not possible or practiced. Thus, on

a fixed time in a year, either the animal herders approach the agrarian communities or it may be the agrarians approach the pastoral nomads, when they are available in their permanent habitats and food grains are exchanged for butter and other milk products as both the items are in demand in both the economic groups and the relationship continues without any possibilities of any competitions. Swayam (2004:29) in the context has rightly observed, "Such a version of correlation between the two economic specializations does not prelude competition between them or the possibility that one prospers disproportionately at the expense of the other."

If we deeply examine the frugality of animal herding then it would be found that the economy in the world scenario is on the decline. The scholars are of the opinion that within the pastoral societies the number of people who live by animal herding is decreasing. Levinson (1947:161) observed that in the region of the former Soviet Union, pastoral societies such as the Kazakhs and the reindeer herders of Siberia have been under government pressure for several centuries. In the Middle East with the end of colonialism, and the establishments of independent nations with centralized governments and economic development, have reduced the number of Bedouin camel and shepherders. Camel herders moving from oasis to oasis are now largely an image from the past. In sub-Saharan Africa and especially in East Africa, pastoralism has been a victim of postcolonial centralized government, since the 1960s. Similarly in the southern Europe, mountain pastoralists are being rapidly drawn into national economies.

TRANSHUMANCE

Pastoralists as a norm, move between the different meadows along with their herds with the change of season. Shepherds drive their flocks and herds to greener meadows during the warmer months and again bring them down with the advent of winter and return to their permanent villages. This practice necessitated a regular company of family or a few family members to accompany the domesticated animals to rear, take care, milk them and ward off the wild beasts along with other related works. In the subsequent period, groups of people round the globe accepted the mode as their socio-economic life to oscillate between the higher braes and plains with their flocks, herds and cattle in the different seasons best suited for the purpose. The economy included the production and marketing of milk and milk products and animals. Such oscillation between the permanent villages and the temporary settlements with the herds and cattle is known as transhumance. Not much of anthropological studies exist on transhumance. In the context of transhumance, Dhar (2001:151) observed, "To understand transhumance it has to make clear at the very outset that it is not an English word. Some are of the opinion that it is Spanish while others think it to be Latin." In the same context Rafiullah (1966:1) observed, "Etymologically transhumance is derived from Latin words 'trans' and 'humus' which respectively correspond to 'across' or 'beyond' and 'ground or lowest level'. In the context of the origin of transhumance Lauwerys (1969:54) perhaps is able to give a direction, "As the cultivator states expanded, many peasant farmers refused to submit to the life of semi-slavery and took to herding, so swelling the number of the traditional pastoralists.

But the problem of the grazing land was acute. Throughout the dry belt, arable land—together with large areas brought profitably into cultivation by irrigation techniques—was surrounded and inter-penetrated in many regions by desert or scrubland. More and more, the herders were pushed out of their pasture lands towards the edge of the deserts. And though their flocks and herds could scrape a living from the scrubland during the rainy season, when the soil was temporarily carpeted with green plants, during the dry season the grasses withered and there was insufficient water for the animals. The herders had to move elsewhere. And so it was that they adopted the practice of *transhumance*: they grazed their herds or flocks on the outskirts of cultivated areas during the rainy season, then, drove them into wetter upland regions and river valleys for the rest of the year”. Whatever be the story of its origin, this much however is sure that the economy of transhumance is solely related with herd management. In this specialized type of pastoral economy the domesticated flocks and herds are grazed in the pastures of varying altitudes in accordance with the change of season and linked with the marketing of milk, milk products and cattle to a lesser extent. Marketing of cattle is also closely associated with ranching but the ranchers raise their cattle mainly for sale. Apparently, pastoralism and ranching may sound to be similar as in both the economies cattle are grazed in open meadows but there are basic differences in the strategies. In the context of the strategies of pastoralism and ranching, Levinson (1947:176) observed, “On the surface, ranching and pastoralism appear to be quite similar as both are based on the grazing of herds on open pasturage. However, the two strategies are actually quite different in a number of ways. Pastoralism traditionally and still in some parts of the

world, is a subsistence strategy, as those cultures labeled pastoralists derive most of their food and other materials from the stock. Ranching is not a subsistence strategy, for while ranchers do get their supply of meat from the stock; the animals are raised mainly to be sold for profit that can, in turn, be used to purchase items in the marketplace. For example, while herders of Central Asia such as Mongols subsisted primarily on meat and milk from their herds, Native American ranchers on the Wind River Reservation raise their cattle for sale, although they do take meat, hides and fats — but not milk — for their own use. The contact between the pastoralists and their flocks and herds is continuous as they are to be protected, milked, moved from pasture to pasture in search of better fodder but the ranchers only periodically are exposed to cattle when they are to be driven to the market for sale. Pastoralism is the subsistence economy, which is thought to have taken birth sometimes in the Neolithic age, and is persisting even today while ranching is the practice that is only a few hundred years old and by now has almost vanished.”

Communities practicing transhumance generally set out from their villages on a fixed day but soon get dispersed into small family units as all the individual families are to follow their own track to their assigned meadows. These individual families are required to travel all by themselves as specialized herdsman. Thus, the people, as a routine job, set out on their annual activities of movement, from grassland to grassland in search of greener pastures by making temporary halts in the meadows. The characteristic of transhumance lies therein: it is the pastoralism of specialized people. Such an oscillation between the permanent villages and the temporary camps of the herders along with the stock with change of

season came to be known as *transhumance*. Transhumant communities are reported from the Sinkiang region. Though the region is dry but the Tien Shan separates a dry south from a less arid north and the northern slopes of the Tien Shan is relatively humid giving rise to a rich belt of steppe. These grasslands make it possible for the nomads to move from east to west with their flocks. Transhumant practices are also reported from Syria, where to enjoy the summer rain and fresh pasture the shepherds lead their flocks up the mountains to high level pastures. Such practices are reported from the semiarid steppes of Turkey where sheep and goats are reared and solidified sour milk, or yoghurt form staple item of diet. Wool is the basis of the domestic rug industry, while the *Angora* variety of wool is exported. Practice of transhumance is reported from certain regions of Iran and Iraq. Transhumance is also common in Baluchistan. With the advent of summer the shepherds move their flocks and herds to the cooler mountain slopes while they descend to the lowlands even up to Sind with the onset of winter (Cressey: 1951). The Sarakatsani, numbering about 80,000 are the sheep and goat herders of the Pindus and the Rhodope mountains of northwestern Greece. The Sarakatsani life centres around the care of the flocks: milking, shearing, building pens for lambing, cheese making and other related activities. They live in a transhumant lifestyle, tending their flocks in the mountain meadows from May to November and then come down to the coastal plains with the setting of winter. The Sarakatsanis do not own pastures but lease them from the neighbouring non-pastoral Greeks (Levinson: 1947). One important aspect observed among the transhumant nomads is that they do not move on any direction at their will like the wandering nomads. In fact, they move out with their flocks

and herds with the change of season, follow a certain prescribed route, reach certain points, stage by stage, halting at all the meadows en route for a considerable period of time and then return to their permanent villages following the same route, stage by stage, along with the stock with the onset of winter when the fodder become scarce in the mountains. This shows that the transhumants move between two fixed points — their permanent settlements and the farthest grassland — from where they return every year in accordance to the season. It is because of this reason that the economy of transhumance is known as “Oscillatory Nomadism”. In other words, such a type of nomadism can be well compared with the oscillation of a pendulum in a wall clock that moves between two fixed points. Transhumance may also be defined as the altering seasonal movement of the livestock and the herders between the permanent settlements and the makeshift camps located at different elevations with appreciably different climatic conditions. Blache (1933) in the context of transhumance observed, “Transhumance is the seasonal movement of the herdsmen and their animals between the summer and winter pastures”. In the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Sills (1972:457) has defined transhumance as highly developed form of pastoralism practiced by the sedentary cultures whose major economic activity is agriculture. It is best known from Europe but is also practiced, although to a lesser degree, by a number of communities of the Caucasus, in the Middle East and the mountainous parts of Asia as far as Tibet. However, the definition of transhumance as put forth by Sills (1972) may not be fully accepted on the ground that he has stressed on agriculture as the major economic activity. It is not true with all the transhumant communities.

In the Mediterranean countries, villagers engaged in the transhumant type of pastoralism traditionally send their flocks of sheep, goats and the herds of cattle to summer pasture. The stocks are generally handed over into the charge of shepherds; goatherds or cowherds specialized in the task. It has been observed that in the economic category of transhumance, population density in relation to the total land mass is low. The level of technology is also limited and their residences are not permanent as found among the agriculturists. In this context, Sandford (1983:316) quite rightly observed, "In pastoral Kenya, 0.2 to 0.7 households per kilometer while in agricultural areas of western Kenya 15 to 100 households per kilometer occur." Families are largely nuclear unlike many of the traditional agricultural communities. As a result many transhumant communities prefer to hand over their herds and flocks to hired shepherds on contracts as they remain unable to spare their own people. In the context of handing over the domesticated animals in trusted hands, Swiddler (1973) reported that the Brahuis in the Middle East usually leave their animals in the trusted hands of their agricultural friends for few months in a year for proper grazing. Contractual relationships also grow between the wealthy and relatively poor pastoral nomads to graze their herds in absence of the required work force by the former. Such contractual understanding is even found in India. Sontheimer (1975) made a similar observation in the Indian context as he found a similar type of understanding between the Dhangars of Maharashtra and the neighbouring farmers as referred by Swayam (2004). Sontheimer (1975) reported, "Farmers entrust their sheep with Dhangars who drive them to Konkan and sell them on behalf of the farmers. The proceeds of sale are brought back by the Dhangars who receive

as commission an amount between Rs.5/- and Rs. 15/- per sale of each sheep.”

So far the village level administration is concerned, the authorities, perhaps, face problems as the members of the transhumant communities largely remain mobile with their herds. There, however, is no detailed information of any novel innovation of any special type of village organization developed by the oscillatory nomads. The problem of exerting political control over the pastoral nomads in the twentieth century was somehow thought to be so acute that a few national governments even planned to settle the pastoralists in villages. Such governmental actions in many instances proved unsuccessful probably such government machineries did not seek any impact assessment studies seeking the help through the environmentalists, anthropologists and other social scientists before launching such projects. Consequently, seventy to eighty per cent sheep of the shepherding Basseri of Iran on being settled in villages by the government machinery have died. It resulted into shortage of wool, meat and draft animals throughout Iran. A more or less similar example can be set in the context of the Massai of Kenya. Once the government converted the Massai range into ranches the result was the degradation of the environment due to overgrazing of the inadequate ranchland. Similarly the Bedouins of Syria, who were transhumant shepherders constituted 8.1 per cent of the Syrian population in 1952, but by 1978 it declined to 3.2 per cent. It happened for mainly two reasons. First, is the increase of population of the non-Bedouin Syrians and secondly, as the Syrian government replaced the Bedouin tribal law with the national civil code and placed the Bedouin grazing land under mechanized cultivation thereby reducing Bedouin grazing space

and encouraging some Bedouins to become farmers. Further, with the construction of the Euphrates dam many grazing land were converted into agricultural plots and many of the erstwhile transhumant Bedouins took to farming while a few took to temporary labourer's job and migrant worker in Saudi Arabia (Levinson :1947:161) In the context of the political organization of the animal herders Goldschmidt (1981:104) commented, "Most pastoralists traditionally had little or no political organization, but some were organized into elaborate nation states.....Finally, most pastoral people, especially those who are heavily dependent upon their animals and those who have little or poorly developed political system, are remote from Western influences have retained most of their traditional culture, and have minimal involvement with the market economy." With regard to the political system of the transhumant communities, it could perhaps be said that the scholars working on the subject were a bit confused as to whether the pastoralists form segments of larger political systems or the political systems of the transhumant nomads were self-contained ones. It is evident from the observation made by Horowitz (1981:64), "Anthropologists have recently begun to rediscover what Kroeber knew 50 years ago: pastoralists form segments of larger political systems. But, since Evans-Pritchard's publication of *The Nuer* (1940), pastoral communities have most often been described as if they were self-contained and as if the tribe constituted the limit of political activity. For that reason, political behaviour among the herders has most often been presented in the idiom of kinship, with the segmentary lineage system as somehow the form of social organization most appropriate to a mobile people for whom animal husbandry constitutes a major portion of their subsistence base." At the same time, it is also incorrect

to think that the societies of the nomadic pastoral herders are unstratified or egalitarian. Asad (1978:64) in the above context noted, “..the technical demands of transhumant herding have been elevated by many scholars into the casual basis for tribal social and political organization. The tendency for many pastoral groups not to include internal hierarchies with power concentrated among an elite segment has led to the false conclusion that herders live in unstratified or egalitarian societies. The treatment of pastoral groups as isolates also obscures their class position in society.” The character that actually bound the nomadic pastoralists into a regulated life was the reciprocal obligations towards each other. It was mainly because the communities were numerically small and used to remain mobile in most hostile serene and uncertain terrains that made them, both individuals and families, dependent on each other and chances of breaking the unwritten code of customary law was remote. Levinson (1947:161) in the context of pastoral political organization has correctly observed, “Many pastoral societies have had a tribal form of political organization with the overarching tribe whose members shared a common language and religion and smaller sections, sub-sections, lineages and families. In pastoral societies, people and groups are tied to one another by an ethos that emphasizes the reciprocal obligations to protect and assist one another.” It will be interesting to note that the Pangchenpas and the Thingbupas, the transhumant tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh, have evolved a mobile village administration that remains fully functional while the members of the community remain on the move from one mountain meadow to another. The members of the Pangchenpas and Thingbupas remain mobile for eight months in a year. It may be noted that *Mangma*,

is the term used by the people to denote their village level political organization that functions when the pastoral nomads remain in their villages during the winters. Surprisingly, the people, are still not able to give any nomenclature to their unique mobile political system the functioning of which is much prolonged while the functioning of the *Mangma* is only for about four months in a year during the winters. As a matter of fact, *Mangma* is also the nomenclature of the village level political organization of the Monpas, the major tribal group of the Tawang and the West Kameng district of the state. Interestingly, the transhumant communities under study are yet to give a proper nomenclature to the political system that functions by remaining mobile for the maximum period in a year which is both unique and traditional.

Transhumance has been broadly categorized into two types, basing solely on the direction of the movement of the transhumant nomads and their herds. The movement from the lower valleys to the upland braes is known as the normal transhumance or transhumance in its original form. Whenever the movement is on the reverse, which is from the upland braes to the plains, is the inverse transhumance. Apart from these two categories, Blanks (1995:69) has reported the third category practiced largely by the communities whose habitats are on the foothill region and enjoy the access to drive their stocks in both upwards as well as in the downward direction. Blanks (1995) has coined the category as the mixed transhumance. It may be mentioned here that both the Pangchenpas and the Thingbupas practice normal transhumance and they move out only in the summer which of course is short lived as because the habitats of both the communities are on the snow range and do not get ample time

for grazing in a calendar year. In the context of the transhumant activities of the Thingbupas, Nanda (1982), however, had a different opinion. Nanda (1982:4) observed, "The three villages of Thingbu, Mago and Luguthang are located above 11,000 feet and are snow bound and deserted in winter. In fact they always wear a deserted look because the inhabitants are Chowreiwallas (yak and sheep graziers) who graze their herds near the border in summer and take them down to warmer pastures in winter." The present author found that the Thingbupas remain largely indoors during the winters barring a short visit to the Monpa villages of Senge, Nyikmadung, Chug and Lish in the Dirang valley to exchange their butter and other milk products for millet. During such visits the people do not move with their flocks and yaks for herding instead a few of them work as daily wage earners as a secondary source of earning.

In the course of the transhumant activities both the populations, however, exploit the widely dispersed ecological zones for herding, a practice continued since the time immemorial. This practice of animal herding has, however, not altered the natural environment of the region as has happened in the Central Asia. Scholars are of the opinion that Central Asia once enjoyed a more favourable environment. The climate was mild with good amount of rainfall and had a better vegetation cover that lasted for most part of the year. The deserts though present were not as arid as found at present. Such an environment was allegedly destroyed by the herds and flocks of the nomads. In this context, Krader (1963:5) observed, "A recent study by the Massons suggests that in the fifth and the fourth millenia B.C. the sands had a plant cover which controlled their spread; this plant cover had since been

destroyed by the herds and flocks of the nomads, and the sands are accordingly more extensive today than they were six or seven thousand years ago”.

It is worth mentioning here that every nuclear family of the Pangchenpa and the Thingbupa possess a series of assigned mountain pastures in the chain of mountains of the region. In each pasture each family has a permanent hut made of stone walls and plank roof where they stay while herding their domesticated animals and are not required to stay in tents or other temporary shelters. Such stone huts in the pastures are known as *Mro-Brang*. The pasture huts of both the Pangchenpas and the Thingbupas are relatively smaller in size compared to their stone houses in their permanent villages. They generally construct double storied stone houses in the villages with the fireplace at the centre so that the heat exerted from the fire place is able to warm up the stones on the walls to make the inmates comfortable in the chilly weather that continues almost round the year. In their pasture huts while their flocks and herds graze, the women generally work to keep the room clean, collect firewood which is very important for their survival, make hay whenever the sun is bright, milk the animals, but, importantly, there is no division of labour basing on sex, as a result it is often a familiar sight to find the husband busy with a blow pipe in the fire place preparing food for the members of the family while the wife and the daughters might be away herding the animals. Both the Pangchenpas and the Thingbupas milk the animals twice, once in the morning and again in the evening. Milking can be done by both the sexes but the animals prefer to be milked by only those persons who regularly milk them. In other words, the animals behave submissive when milked by their known hands. Interestingly, the women folk of

the Pangchenpas tie small, three legged, wooden stools from their waists in such a way that the legs of the stools automatically touch the ground in the most appropriate way whenever the women bend their bodies in an attempt to sit and milk the animals. It is in contrast to that of the Nuers where males are forbidden to milk cows. Evans-Pritchard (1940-22) in this context observed, "Men are forbidden to milk cows." In the sub-Saharan Africa, as observed by Goldschmidt (1981:103), a division of labour basing on sex has been found. The care of livestock in the sub-Saharan Africa is normally the responsibility of the men, though women often milk animals and have special rights to them. This leads to an overwhelming tendency in these societies towards masculine unity in the social structure and to patrilineal rules of descent and inheritance.

In the Indian context, a few transhumant communities have been identified in certain pockets in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal. They are the Bakarwals of the Kashmir valley, the Gujjars of Himachal Pradesh, and the Gaddis, found distributed in Uttaranchal and Himachal Pradesh. The Bakarwals are the sheep rearers and their geographical area of activity with the change of season ranges from Anantnag to Pahelgam up to the Amarnath cave and return with the onset of winter. The Bakarwals are also known to follow another transhumant route and from Anantnag they move to Sonmarg via Tral, Srinagar and Kangan and sometimes via Khilonmarg up to Uri. The Gujjars of Himachal Pradesh Uttaranchal, Panjab and Haryana descend down to Nahan district of Himachal and those from Uttaranchal rear their buffaloes near Hrishikesh and subsequently move to the uplands. The Gujjars of Panjab and Haryana are, however,

mainly selled agriculturals. The Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh move to the various meadows in the Himachal with their flocks of sheep and descend to the Chakrata *tehsil* of the Dehradun district. They are also known to extend their movement up to Yamunotri and then follow two optional routes. One of the routes leads them to certain regions of Kinnaur district up to an altitude of about 12,000 feet above the mean sea level via Rampur Bushar and the second route is towards the Bandar Punch mountain peak (Dhar:2001). In the context of the animal herders in India Swayam (2004) observed that in Gujarat and in the southern Rajasthan there are many communities that rear herbivorous animals. Historically, there were many communities in this region of the country with the primary economy of animal herding and a few of them are still referred to the folk tales. Mention may be made of the Gujjars, Yadavas and the Ahirs. However, even today, there are a few more that can be named with the primary economy of pastoralism, namely, the Charan, the Bharwad, the Rabari and the Sindhi Muslims. The meaning of Rabari and Bharwad in vernacular can be translated as those who stay away from settlements; and Charan means graziers. Nevertheless, nothing is known about the four transhumant communities of the high altitude regions of the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Out of these the Magopa and the Luguthangpa are still untouched by the anthropological world due to remoteness and extreme inaccessibility of their habitats.

As of today the Pangchenpas are relatively easily reached but the Thingbupas still live in isolation and one has to undertake four day mountain foot-march through unfriendly terrain from the district headquarter town of Tawang over an average height of above 10,000 feet above the mean sea level

amidst the risks of crossing the broken and temporarily built bridges over gushing ice-cold mountain streams. One has to be extra cautious while climbing down a brae because if a slip takes place then one does not know where he will land. As per officially prescribed time notified by the Deputy Commissioner of Tawang, the highest Government administrative authority, to reach Thingbu, the only permanent village of the Thingbupas, from the district headquarter town of Tawang are four days but one has to reach in two days because there are no villages or habitats in between where people can halt for the night. Even in the two days which is considered the fastest possible foot march to reach Thingbu and a task that can only be accomplished by the physically fit people, one has to make a night halt near a natural cave with a small hut which is a PWD (Public Works Department) 'Inspection Bunglow' looked after by a watchman who is stationed there. The spot is known as Broksar. Apart from that small hut nothing is available around but the cover of snow and ranges of mountains. Before reaching Broksar a traveller has to undergo even a tougher test of his ability as he has to pass through a stretch of about fifteen feet on his profile without looking down. It is because the rock over there is so hard that the track could not be cut in a proper way but only a path of about six inches in breadth could be made with lot of difficulties and risk. Hence a traveller has to walk slowly on his profile by holding support on the sharper edges of the rock at his back. While passing through the stretch one has to look only at his eye level lest his head and fall thousands of feet below in the blue stream. Habitats of the other two communities, namely, the Magopa and the Luguthangpa are located in even more isolation and are situated beyond Thingbu. The author had the opportunity to lead a

small team of anthropologists and reach the habitats of the Pangchenpas and the Thingbupa in 1995 and in 1996 respectively. Prior to this expedition no team of anthropologists or people from any other stream of social sciences ever reached them.