

CHAPTER V

NATURE OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

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Introduction

Social organization is a general term used in different ways in different contexts but usually referring to organizational aspects of societies, communities, institutions, and groups. Even such seemingly disorganized settings as slums and criminal life have been shown to be efficiently organized: certain rules of conduct are understood by all members of the organization and are maintained through various means. Perhaps the most basic aspect of social organization is a common understanding among members of the organization (whether a group, community, institution, or society) as to the interpretation of certain aspects of social reality (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 273).

Early sociologists and social philosophers used the term “social organization” in a broad sense to refer to societies. Auguste Comte defined social organization as ‘general social agreement’ or ‘social consensus’. Herbert Spencer used ‘social organization’ to refer to interrelations of the economic, political and other divisions of society. Emile Durkheim used the term to refer mostly to social integration and individual regulation through consensus about morals and values.

At present, the term “social organization” is used to refer to the interdependence of parts in groups. These groups may vary in size and nature from small cliques of workers, to hospitals and factories. The term is used in sociological studies and researches today to stress the importance of arrangement of parts and their interdependence in groups and in societies. The concept is of help in understanding the way in which the parts of society are related to each other and how each is related to the whole society (Rao, 2005: 266-7).

V. 1. Issues Related to Social Organization

V.1.a. Economic System

The economic institution defined as a subsystem of society in the same manner as political, educational, and religious institutions are subsystems of the total system, is the system of interrelated roles and statuses concerned with the production and distribution of goods and services (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 93). An economy is a set of institutional arrangements through which goods and services are produced and distributed in a society. From the time of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim, sociologists have had a long and complex interest in economic institutions, especially as these relate to noneconomic aspects of social life such as the state, education, and the family (Johnson 1995: 91). Man is not only a social animal, but also an economic being. He is incessantly engaged in what are known as economic pursuits or activities. These economic activities are so multifaceted, varied and complex that they constitute what is known as an economy. The economy may be treated as a system or a sub-system. It is a sub-system in the wider social system. It is possible to view the economy as the parent system, and analyze its constituent clusters of activities; production, investment, innovation, and so on as themselves constituting sub-system (Rao 2005: 380).

All the hundred (100) respondents of the Thoubal district along with the ten (10) respondents of Imphal East district (rural) follow agriculture as their main occupation and along with that vegetable plantation, pottery, weaving, fishing, petty business, animal husbandry, etc as secondary occupation. Similarly all the remaining two hundred and ninety (290) respondents also have agriculture as their main source of livelihood. And besides this, brewing country wine is another major source of income supplemented by animal husbandry, silk rearing, weaving, small business, etc.

Except the Lois of Thoubal, who do not brew or rear animals like pigs, all the other Lois indulge in agriculture and brewing as their main occupation. Among the Lois in all the four districts, except for a small number of 6.25% (25) respondents of Waroiching village in Bishnupur district who could not utilize tractor due to the unfavorable and rocky fields, majority of others that is 93.75% (375) of the respondents have started using modern techniques like tractors, power-tiller, fertilizers, etc along with the traditional method of bullock ploughing. Much economic development is been delayed due to poor infrastructure like lack of irrigation system for farming, proper equipments to distill liquor and adequate tools for silk weaving etc. Above that, except for few villages like Sekmai, Kakching which have proper market facility, other villages do not have proper place for trading and marketing, thus, hindering the development of these scheduled caste villages. Unlike earlier times where they were confined only to agriculture and brewing, now they have an increasing desire for government services, small businesses, etc along with their daily agricultural routine.

In all the four districts 37.25% (149) of the respondents are properly indulged in brewing (Photos V. 1,2,3) for both religious as well as commercial purposes. All of them expressed that they cannot say precisely the amount they earn from brewing but on an average they can earn around five hundred to a thousand rupees a month or sometimes more or less depending on the season as well as the amount of the distillation. They all employ distillation method (Photo V.4) for the purpose of brewing regardless of urban or rural location. And a good number of 62.75% (251) do not involve in brewing liquor. In Thoubal district irrespective of urban or rural location none of them brew liquor for any purpose. They employ hand wheel method for pottery and use the traditional fly shuttle technique (Photo V.5) for producing silk clothes.



Photo V.1 A Loi woman mixing yeast and cooked rice for brewing



Photo V.2 The mixture being kept for fermentation



Photo V.3 The pots containing rice are being covered for proper fermentation



Photo V.4 The distillation process



Photo V.5 The fly shuttle employed for weaving

61% (244) of them expressed that their production from the field is sufficient for their family requirement for paddy. While for the remaining 39% (156) of the respondents their production from the field is not at all sufficient for the whole family's requirement. 21.75% (87) of the respondents expressed that the income they earn from different sources is sufficient to maintain their family while 78.25% (313) felt that their income is not sufficient for their survival. Only a small portion of 6.25% (25) are no more involved in farming personally but the larger portion of the respondents i.e. 93.75% (375) are still involved in farming irrespective of their urban or rural location. Those who work at offices adjust their timings for farming either before or after office timings.

Among the four hundred of them, 27.25% (109) have saved some amount of money which varies from five hundred to two thousand a month in bank, LIC or in local self help group called 'marup' while 72.75% (291) do not have savings anywhere.

Regarding the issue of their low caste being a factor leading to their low economic condition, all the Thoubal urban respondents i.e. 17.5% (70) explained that though their low caste status is a reason for their poor economy but there are other factors such as illiteracy, ignorance, lack of income etc which aggravate their poor economic condition. While the majority of them that is 82.5% (330) disagreed with the view of their low caste being responsible for their poor economy and reasoned that there are Scheduled Castes who are sound economically and Hindu Meiteis who are poor. According to them it is lack of resources, poor literacy, poor infrastructure, improper transport and communication, lack of employment, negligence by government and above all being situated in remote rural areas which lead to their poor financial condition.

In another important occupation that is animal husbandry, animals like cows, buffaloes and oxen are domesticated for cultivation purpose and production of milk. And animals like pigs, birds like hens and ducks are commonly used for their eggs and for

selling to slaughter them. Domestication is practiced by 70.5% (282) of them while 29.5% (118) of them are not domesticating any animals.

When in monetary needs 7.5% (30) took the help from their children and relatives for money as well as for other matters, while 2.5% (10) of them have not borrowed money so far. And another group of 25% (100) of the respondents expressed that they depend on money lenders as well as relatives at times of need but not lend money from banks since they have long process and also requires security. And the remaining majority of 65% (260) have depended totally on the money lenders when they require money.

Regarding the amount of land holdings among the respondents, it is found that in all the four districts, 69 (31.37%) of the rural respondents and 81 (45%) urban respondents have 0.5 to 2.5 acres of cultivable land where they mostly grow paddy and other crops. 36 (16.36%) rural and 44 (24.44%) urban respondents have 2.6 to 4 acres of land. 34 (15.46%) from rural and 25 (13.89%) of them from urban have land holdings upto 4.1 acres and above while 30 (16.67%) and 81 (36.81%) urban and rural respectively have no cultivable land for themselves (Table V. 1).

Table V. 1
Land holdings of the respondents

Land holdings	Rural (n=220)	%	Urban (n=180)	%	Total
.5--2.5 acres	69	31.37	81	45	150
2.6--4 acres	36	16.36	44	24.44	80
4.1 acres & above	34	15.46	25	13.89	59
Nil	81	36.81	30	16.67	111
Total	220	100	180	100	400

Among all the four hundred respondents the possession of material assets like radio and television are the highest in number. 41.67 % (75) urban and 39.54% (87) rural respondents have only radio while 22.78% (41) urban and 35.90% (79) rural respondents have both radio and television. Some of them that is 22.78% (41) urban and 11.37 (35) rural respondents have television, telephone and two wheelers also. A few of them enjoying the facility of fridge and computer are 4.44% (8) urban and 0.90% (2) rural respondents. Some of the respondents that is 7.22% (13) urban and 5.46% (12) rural have four wheelers also while 1.11% (2) urban and 1.37% (3) rural respondents are owning tractor/ power tiller. The respondents who have no material possession are 5.46% (12) of them from rural area (Table V.2).

Table V. 2

Respondents' possession of material assets

List of material assets	Rural (n=220)	%	Urban (n=180)	%	Total
Radio	87	39.54	75	41.67	162
Radio & T.V.	79	35.90	41	22.78	120
T. V., two wheeler, telephone	25	11.37	41	22.78	66
Fridge, Computer	2	0.90	8	4.44	10
Four wheelers	12	5.46	13	7.22	25
Tractor/power tiller	3	1.37	2	1.11	5
No assets	12	5.46	0	0	12
Total	220	100	180	100	400

To market their produced goods they do not require to go to the Imphal main market frequently. Though many of the villages do not have proper market facility but their small shed within their village becomes a center for such transactions. For proper business and trading purposes they have to go to their nearby areas which have proper market facility. For instance, in Bishnupur district there is a small shed at Leimaram and big markets at Nambol bazaar and Moirang bazaar (nearer to Leimaram village as compared to Imphal market); Imphal East district at Andro bazaar; Imphal West district at Sekmai which has a big market, so, people from neighboring villages also come for

marketing purposes; and Thoubal district at Thoubal market, Kakching market and Wabagai market are some of the main areas where the regular trade and commerce takes place. At the same time all of them added that they also have to visit Imphal main market for business purpose as well as for purchasing other requirements.

According to the opinion of 3% (12) of the respondents who considered themselves to have belonged to the middle class category because they have sufficient income to maintain their families. All the other 97% (388) respondents irrespective of the districts and other criteria expressed that they belong to lower class as they have low source of income, lack development and are economically, politically and socially backward.

Regarding the issue of class conflict among them or between other castes, majority of them expressed that such situation is almost absent except for a middle aged man (0.25%) of Thoubal (urban), who said that sometimes they face emotional conflict in the matter of job due to less percentage of reservation. While the majority of 99.75% (399) of them irrespective of the criteria responded that there are no class conflicts among Scheduled Castes, and between Scheduled Castes or other castes. They all shared a common view that they have a very normal and good economic relation with other castes.

In both the urban and rural areas of Thoubal district and some panathokpa (Hinduized) families of Andro Khunou and Khurkhul of Imphal West districts brewing liquor is completely restricted. The practice of brewing being a very polluting and degrading occupation is the reason for its restriction and absence in these areas. While the other Loi villages especially Sekmai, Phayeng, Leimaram, Andro, Koutruk etc. are practicing brewing as an important source of income. Agriculture is the main source of income for almost all of them and other activities like pottery, silk rearing, piggery also supplement to their income. Due to lack of adequate machinery production of the items is

time consuming and they have to go to the markets in other villages to market the goods. Above that poor transport and communication are main factors of their low economy. Majority of them do not have sufficient income for their survival.

V.1. b. Occupational System

Occupation is the shared evaluation of an economic status of work activity by members of society. The prestige of an occupation depends on the society in which it is located. Different subgroups within a society may rank occupations differently. Occupational prestige is based on the amount of discretionary control the occupant has over his own and others' activities. Even unskilled workers who decide for themselves what they are to do on the job are ranked higher than those who do not (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 199-200).

Occupation is often synonymous with job but may refer to a group of similar jobs identified with a common occupational title. Jobs and occupations can be described not only in terms of tasks, but also in terms of associated characteristics such as skill, responsibility, earnings, entry, qualifications, and prestige. More diffuse characteristics may derive from the incumbents of occupations, such as life-style, cultural mannerisms, and so forth (Marshall 1994: 457-8).

Occupation is used to refer to the specialized and established kind of work. It denotes the habitual employment, profession, craft or trade of an individual. In modern connotations it means an instrument of livelihood. It is usually associated with one or the other kind of organization that is, agriculture, industry, Governmental organizations, etc. People pursue one occupation or other in order to eke out their livelihood (Rao 2005: 381).

The Lois are basically agriculturalists by occupation but they are also distillers of liquor, potters and also practice sericulture. During King's rule they performed according to the work allotted to them. For instance, *Sekmai*, *Phayeng* were "Yu Lois"

(brewers), *Khurkhul*, *Leimaram* were “*Langlois*” (weavers/Sericulturists), *Phayeng* was also “*Shinglois*” (wood collectors), *Andro* were *potters and brewers* etc.

Relating to the issue of the choice of occupation on the basis of one's caste, 1.5% (6) of Thoubal (rural) and Imphal West (urban) and (rural) respondents have expressed that earlier during King's rule occupation like piggery, poultry, brewing, silk rearing, etc were considered as polluting and thus, were professed only by the Lois. The produced goods were to be presented in the form of tribute to the king which was known as “*Loipot*”. These occupations were entrusted on Lois according to the suitability of the areas and their skills or as punishments which were later on continued by the descendents as habituated profession but not as a compulsion or caste based occupation. And they also expressed that such classification of polluting work of lower castes and non-polluting work of higher castes is not seen now. In the present situation, people profess occupations according to their choice, capability and suitability of the area. Similarly the remaining respondents of 98.5% (394) regardless of the differences in districts and age group responded that their occupation is not classified on the basis of one's caste but according to the availability and skill of the people and the area in which they are settled.

In all the four districts, 93 of both urban and rural respondents are engaged in brewing liquor, 13 and 18 of them are involved in pottery and sericulture respectively. And a majority (375) of them from both the urban and rural areas are involved in agricultural activities as their main source of income (Table V. 3).

Table V. 3
Traditional Occupation

Districts		Category				Total
		Brewing	Pottery	Sericulture	Agriculture	
Bishnupur	Rural	29	0	02	90	121
	Urban	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	29	0	02	90	121
Imphal East	Rural	05	0	0	24	29
	Urban	30	05	03	78	116
	Total	35	05	03	102	145
Imphal West	Rural	20	0	08	61	89
	Urban	09	0	01	31	41
	Total	29	0	09	92	130
Thoubal	Rural	0	08	01	32	41
	Urban	0	0	03	59	62
	Total	0	08	04	91	103
Total		93	13	18	375	499

Hundred percent of the respondents answered that any caste member can perform any occupation of his or her choice regardless of one's caste and settlement. And there is no barrier or restriction on choosing of occupation favorable to them which includes agriculture as the main occupation, brewing, animal rearing (Photo V.6), weaving, sericulture (Photos V. 7,8,9), pottery (Photos V. 10,11,12,-13), petty business, and public services etc. as supplemented occupations. All of them replied that they hardly had any idea of the traditional occupations of other Scheduled Castes and have not heard of the others except for the Yaithibis.



Photo V.6 A small piggery farm



Photo V.7 Silkworms



Photo V.8 Cucoons



Photo V.9 Silkyarns



Photo V.10 Loi women mixing water and mud for pottery



Photo V.11 Using simple wheel method for pottery



Photo V.12 Shaping the wet pots



Photo V.13 Drying the pots

Among all the four hundred respondents, 78 of them have got service in government sector while a less number of respondents that is (34) and (26) of them from both rural and urban are involve in business and private services like teaching in private schools etc. And a majority of (111) and (264) from both rural and urban are engaged either as agricultural laborer in other's field or cultivating their own land (Table V. 4).

Table V. 4
Occupational profile

Districts		Category					Total
		Business	Pvt. Sector	Govt. Service	Agricultural Laborer	Cultivators	
Bishnupur	Rural	10	07	15	49	42	123
	Urban	0	0	0	0	0	0
Imphal East	Rural	0	0	01	15	08	24
	Urban	04	06	05	12	67	94
Imphal West	Rural	12	03	16	11	51	93
	Urban	03	03	15	02	28	51
Thoubal	Rural	0	0	06	11	20	37
	Urban	05	07	20	11	48	91
Total		34	26	78	111	264	513

It is seen that a good number of respondents that is 60% (132) rural and 67.78% (122) urban are practicing animal rearing. While 40 %(88) and 32.22% (58) of them from rural and urban areas respectively are not rearing animals (Table V. 5).

According to the number of respondents given below, they are occupationally backward due to various factors: 10% (18) urban and 20% (44) rural respondents felt lack of education and information to be important factors; 22.22% (40) urban and 22.27% (49) rural respondents consider lack of education, modern technique, trading centers as important factors; 23.9% (43) and 12.27% (27) respondents of from both urban and rural areas respectively felt that lack of education, modern technique, and

government's negligence are the important reasons; according to 8.33% (15) urban and 5.90% (13) rural respondents it is due to the lack of government support, trading centers and modern technique while 26.11% (47) urban and 35.46% (78) rural respondents felt that all the above mentioned factors are equally responsible and some of them that is 9.44% (17) urban and 4.1% (9) respondents from rural areas have not commented as they have no knowledge of it. They further explained that besides the above highlighted reasons there are other important factors like, lack of improved transport and communication facilities and being in rural and backward areas are also equally important. According to them the government's policies are good but due to poor implementation only a few get the advantage of them (Table V. 6).

The occupation of brewing, silk rearing, pottery, etc. are not caste based. Any one can profess any occupation of his or her choice. They are very much attached to these economic activities as they have seen doing from generations and do not require hard skills for it. Lack of proper education, modern techniques of production, improper transport and communication connecting to other villages and to the town area are some of the primary reasons for their backwardness in occupation.

Table V. 5

Respondent's involvement in animal husbandry

Animal husbandry	Rural N=220	%	Urban N=180	%	Total
Yes	132	60	122	67.78	254
No	88	40	58	32.22	146
Total	220	100	180	100	400

Table V. 6
Respondents' opinion regarding various reasons for
backwardness in their occupation

Reasons for backwardness in their occupation	Rural (n=220)	%	Urban (n=180)	%	Total
Lack of education & information	44	20	18	10	62
Lack of education & modern technique & trading centers	49	22.27	40	22.22	89
Lack of education, government negligence & modern techniques	27	12.27	43	23.9	70
Lack of govt. support, trading centers & modern technique only	13	5.90	15	8.33	28
All the above factors	78	35.46	47	26.11	125
No idea	9	4.1	17	9.44	26
Total	220	100	180	100	400

V.1.c. Education

Education is the training that sees as its goal directing students toward acquiring the proper attitudes, habits, and skills necessary for those occupations that demand some degree of special technical knowledge and skills (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 95).

Durkheim (1961) maintained that, 'Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands'. Without these 'essential similarities', co-operation, social solidarity and therefore social life itself would be impossible.

Durkheim conceives of education as "the socialization of the younger generation". He further states that it is "a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting which he could not have arrived at spontaneously". Some

thinkers have equated it with socialization. A few others regard education as an attempt to transmit the cultural norms of the group to its younger members (Rao 2005: 370-71). The role of education as an agent or instrument of social change and development is widely recognized today. As MacIver says, social change takes place as a response to many types of changes that takes place in the social and non-social environment. Education can initiate social changes by bringing about a change in the outlook and attitude of man. It can bring about a change in the pattern of social relationships and thereby it may cause social changes (ibid: 373).

Regarding the choice of schools for their children, though 21.25% (85) have opted for government schools they actually wanted their children to be admitted in English medium / Private school as they felt that Private schools are better but could not afford the heavy expenditure of it due to poor financial condition. But among them two (0.5%) of them gave a different viewpoint saying that, it is the student's efficiency and hard work which really matters and not on being admitted to Government school or English medium / Private school. And a large majority of 78.75% (315) regardless of differences in age, sex and area preferred for English medium / Private schools and also admit their children in such schools. They consider them much better and more suited to modern times because of their advanced teaching techniques, strictness, systematic and disciplined system, etc. compared to Government schools (Table V.7).

Table V. 7
Respondents' choice of educational institutions

Category/Area	Rural	%	Urban	%	Total
Government school	56	25.45	29	16.11	85
Private English School	164	74.55	151	83.9	315
Total	220	100	180	100	400

For the purpose of studies, it is found that 11% (44) of the family members have migrated outside their villages to other areas temporarily. And 8% (32) of the respondents' family members have migrated outside the state temporarily for higher studies. The remaining 81% (324) of the respondents or their children or their family members never migrated for such purpose.

Hundred percent of the respondents shared the opinion that a person's achievement of high level of education is very much related to his class status.

In the matter of availing the educational facilities, 46.5% (186) have got the benefits of post-matric scholarship, reservation in government institutions, etc either by themselves or by their family members, but 53.5% (214) of them have not been benefited by any of these educational facilities. The reasons they attribute to it are varied and some of them are - for not being able to clear matric exam; for not being properly aware of the process to achieve the facilities; for being the first preference given to the near ones of those in authority, etc.

Regarding the issue of literacy level among the Scheduled Castes, 7.25% (29) have the opinion that their literacy level has been slowly increasing due to the factors like improving infrastructure, transport and communication, and rise of self interest which were not so in the earlier times. Similarly 16% (64) of Thoubal district (urban) respondents expressed that their literacy level is rather high in Kakching but if, all Scheduled Castes are taken together then the percentage is low. While 56% (224) related their low literacy level with factors like poor infrastructure, improper transport and communication, low source of income, heavy field work, lack of parent's guidance and self- interest to study and poor academic atmosphere. Those who responded of having no idea were 20.75% (83).

All the hundred percent of the respondents irrespective of the given criteria expressed that they were encouraged as well as they encourage and support their children for higher education as much as they can, because they have a feeling that only through education one can acquire knowledge, status and upward mobility. Though they cannot specify the rate of literacy of men and women among them but they experience that it has been increasing to some extent as compared to the earlier times as people have realized the value of education. They are of the opinion that higher and proper education makes a person, a better and well equipped human being which will commensurate with occupational and status achievement.

Unlike earlier times today education has become a prime concern among the Scheduled Castes. Most of them wanted to send their children to good English medium schools instead of Government run schools as they are more efficient. But all of them cannot manage to do so. They have realized that education can be the most important means of enhancing status and mobility. As a result many of them migrating temporarily to Imphal as well as outside the state is frequently noticed. And this realization has led to an increase in literacy among both men and women of this section of Manipur.

V.1.d. Political System

Politics is the social process through which collective power is generated, organized, distributed, and used in social systems. In most societies, politics is organized primarily around the institution of the State, although this is a relatively recent development. In feudal societies, for example, the state was quite weak and undeveloped and political power rested primarily in nobles, vassals, and clergy whose sphere of influence was sharply limited by the extent of their lands (Johnson 1995: 205).

Politics is essentially an ancient and universal experience. The art and science of political analysis has developed over several thousand years throughout many

parts of the world. Bottomore (1962) makes a distinction between three kinds of political system; (i) Political system of tribal societies which are slowly getting modernized and industrialized, Ex: African Societies. (ii) Political system in non-industrial Countries of ancient civilizations which are being industrialized after emancipation from colonial and autocratic rule. Ex: Countries of Asia, Middle East, some Latin American Countries, and (iii) Political system of the industrial societies. Max Weber was of the opinion that the type of political system depends upon the nature of its legitimacy. Legitimacy rests on three factors: (i) Tradition, (ii) Exceptional Personal Qualities or Charismatic Personality, and (iii) Legality (Rao 2005 : 399)

Political participation is voluntary taking part in policy making and choosing of political leaders by members of the public (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 204).

During the native rule every common Meitei between the ages of sixteen to sixty have to perform '*lal-lup*' '*lal*' meaning war and '*lup*' meaning organization. So, it literally means Army of the state, but practically '*lal-lup*' was used not only for the purpose of war but also for the development of work of the state- voluntary cum compulsory rendering of service to the state in rotation. The Lois did not perform '*lal-lup*' but were subjected to much heavier duties which they were asked to perform (Saha 1994: 141).

The institution of Khullakpa or village headman has a longstanding story. In the past the Khullakpa used to be directly selected by the king of Manipur. Selection was neither based on the efficiency in public life nor on the efficiency in warfare. The Loi Khullakpas of different villages used to visit the royal palace with their produced items like distilled liquor and earthen pots, the acceptance of which symbolized royal allocation of such occupations (Das 1985: 27).

The Traditional Administrators in the Loi Village/ Municipal Area

The village administration during the king's period was very powerful. All the powers were vested upon the traditional administrators who worked directly under the King. There is slight variation in the number of positions as well as the titles given according to different villages. In all the Loi villages Khullakpa being the village chief controls the village administration. Some members of the traditional administration like Luplakpa, Khunjahanba, Yubalpa and Pakhanglakpa are the main administrators commonly present in every village while other administrators may be available in some villages and may not necessarily be available in other village.

With the introduction of modern political system like Panchayat, the power and functions of the Khullakpa and his other assistants have reduced only to the functions of Lai Haraoba ceremony and other religious matters of the village. The traditional administrators are still in existence in almost all the Loi villages. The traditional administrators are presented as below;

Khullakpa: the meaning of 'khul' means village and 'lakpa' means controller. So, it literally means the chief or the controller of the village.

Luplakpa: 'Lup' meaning organization and 'lakpa' meaning controller. In status and position he is just next the Khullakpa. Luplakpa has to assist Khullakpa in every activity.

Khunjahanba: Its literal meaning is the 'oldest or the eldest member in the village'. His function is to organize gatherings and meetings for required activities of the village. He is consulted in all socio-religious affairs of the village.

Yubalpa: 'Yu' means the country liquor brewed from rice. The duty of the Yubalpa is to look after the quality and quantity of the production of yu in the village every year.

Telloihanjab: He is the officer in-charge of the soldiers and he controls and instructs the soldiers of their duties and at times of war or conflicts / disputes.

Hidanglakpa: He is the officer in-charge of all the production of boats. He used to control all the boats and even at times of war. Without his permission no one in the village can make use or construct a new boat.

Taloihidang: It is a position next to the Telloihanjaba and he has to work as an assistant to Telloihanjaba in all the activity.

Pakhanglakpa: He is the controller of the unmarried men in the village starting from the age of twenty five (the age is not fixed). He trains the youths with different skills so that they are useful to the society at large.

Naharakpa: He is the assistant officer to the Pakhanglakpa. He controls and trains those who are even younger than the Pakhang. He has to discuss all the matters with the Pakhanglakpa.

Loumilakpa: He is the officer in - charge of all the fields, farms, and other properties of the villagers. He has the duty of collecting revenue and is responsible for leasing out fields to villagers. He looks after the irrigation and other requirements of the farmers.

Loumidang: He is the assistant to Loumilakpa, they discusses and decide regarding the products of the fields etc.

Ningollakpa: He is the one who controls all the female members of the village. He taught different skills so that they can become self sufficient in their life. For this purpose he organizes gatherings and meetings.

The above mentioned officers are almost common for all the Loi villages though there were variations in the title of different Loi villages. The number of the officers is also different from village to village and they are still in existence in the Loi villages but their functions are now mainly confined to the religious affairs only.

Coming to the modern political system and party preferences, 9.10% (20) rural and 33.33% (60) of the urban respondents have the inclination of giving their votes

to any candidate from their constituency regardless of party differences. While Congress-I is opted as the preferred party by 12.72% (28) rural and 10.56% (19) urban respondents. Their preference for Congress is due to its association with the Gandhian ideology and their struggle for Indian independence. Similarly, BJP is favored by 4.09% (9) and 2.22% (4) of them from rural and urban respectively. And 1.81% (4) rural and 5.56% (10) urban respondents are favorable to any good working regional party such as NCP/CPI. Contradicting all the above responses a majority of 72.28% (159) rural and 48.33% (87) urban respondents preferred to give their votes to those candidates who are sincere, honest and potential rather than on party's name (Table V. 8).

Table V. 8

Respondents' preference for certain political parties

Preference for certain political parties	Rural (n=220)	%	Urban (n=180)	%	Total
Congress I	28	12.72	19	10.56	47
B.J.P.	9	4.09	4	2.22	13
Regional Party	4	1.81	10	5.56	14
Candidate's qualities	159	72.28	87	48.33	246
Any candidate from their constituencies	20	9.10	60	33.33	80
Total	220	100	180	100	400

In Sangaithel village of Imphal West district there is no village head or *Khullakpa*. They have a group of members formed by the villagers called '*Lai Committee*' which deals with every work related to village rituals or Lai-Haraoba (festival related to God of the village). The village elders supervise and take care of all the village matters.

In Koutruk, village head or *Khullakpa* is selected, from the names given voluntarily or proposed by the villagers through lottery method and their main responsibility is in organizing '*Lai-Haraoba*' and other village ceremonies.

In Sekmai, Phayeng, Tairenpokpi and Khurkhul village *Khullakpa* is selected, through villagers' consent. And unlike earlier times where *Khullakpa* presides in all village matters, now his functions have reduced to "*Lai-Haraoba*" and some village ceremonies only. *Khullakpa* is selected from scheduled caste only.

Even in Kakching and Thongjao area in the Thoubal district during King's time, village head or *Khullakpa* was appointed by the King according to his choice, but later any person who is eligible and who expresses a desire to become one and if supported by the villagers can become a *Khullakpa*. Thoubal Khunou has no *Khullakpa*. After independence, their importance has reduced to a great extent and their functions of controlling the whole village in various matters have reduced only to conducting *Lai-Haraoba* and managing other religious matters as village political, economical and developmental matters are dealt by the councilor / pradhan of the respective village.

Similarly, except Kamu Yaithibi of Imphal East, (rural) which has no *Khullakpa* / village head, in Bishnupur and Imphal East districts the village heads are selected on the consent of the village elders and are from scheduled caste only.

In Imphal West district, Sekmai has both municipal area which is looked after by the Councilor and rural area which is taken care by the Pradhan.

As Khurkhul, Phayeng, Tairenpokpi, Sangaithel and Koutruk being all total rural areas, Pradhan and Panchayat members are elected under Panchayati Raj system to deal with village matters.

In Imphal East district, Kamu Yaithibi and Andro Khunou Torongthel are rural areas and thus, Panchayati Raj prevails while in Andro (NAC) municipal council looks after the area.

In Bishnupur district village like Leimaram, Sadu Koireng as well as Terakhonsangbi are all under the leadership of the Pradhan and Panchayat members.

In all the above mentioned villages the Pradhan / Councillor is elected from among scheduled caste only as they are predominantly populated except in Thoubal Khunou of Thoubal district where the Councilor is a Meitei Pangan (Muslim) as Muslims being majority in this block.

According to the knowledge of 68.5% (274) of the respondents, the elected political representatives are- (i) Kh. Chaoba (late ex-minister), (ii) Kh. Chandra (ex-MLA from Sekmai), (iii) N. Biren (present MLA from Andro). While those who had no awareness at all of the elected scheduled caste members were 31.5% (126) from all the four districts together.

Regarding the upliftment by the scheduled caste politicians for their fellowmen, 32.25% (129) regardless of the differences of urban and rural continuity and age variation felt that the scheduled caste politicians, to an extent, are working for their upliftment but due to various factors like less number of elected representatives, preferences for respective constituency and lack of unity and biasness among their workers have led to a feeling of dissatisfaction among these people. But a large number of respondents that is 62.5% (250) have denied of any scheduled caste politician working for their development. They felt that whosoever elected is only concerned to their respective area rather than for the scheduled caste population as a whole. And contrastingly 4.25% (17) expressed that except for late Kh. Chaoba (ex-minister, Sekmai) and some other early scheduled caste politicians no other scheduled caste politician has worked properly for Scheduled Castes as a whole, while 1% (4) of them had no idea of it (Table V. 9).

Of all the respondents 84.75% (339) are aware of the national and local political leaders like President and Prime Minister of India, Chief Minister and Ministers of Legislative Assembly of the state etc though some of them cannot name all of them properly. And 15.25% (61) have no knowledge of them.

Table V. 9

Respondents' opinion of the SC politicians' upliftment for their fellowmen

SC Politicians work for the upliftment of their fellowmen	Rural (n=220)	%	Urban (n=180)	%	Total
Yes	81	36.81	48	26.67	129
No	128	58.19	122	67.78	250
Only few politicians worked	9	4.10	8	4.44	17
No idea	2	0.90	2	1.11	4
Total	220	100	180	100	400

1.75% (7) of the respondents in all the four districts stated that they have no preferences for any particular Government but what they need is an efficient Government. 5.5% (22) of them opted President rule as an alternative political system in order to streamline and frame proper law and order, which increases efficiency in maintaining the state. While 4.5% (18) of them want Communist party run Government due to its ideology of equality, emphasis on farmers, its equality for economy. And the majority of 88.25% (353) of them have opted for democratic form of Government as they consider it most suitable form of Government which renders value of equal rights and freedom to all (Table V. 10).

Table V. 10

Respondents' preference for Types of government

Types of Government	Rural (n=220)	%	Urban (n=180)	%	Total
Communist Party	5	2.28	13	7.22	18
President Rule	10	4.54	12	6.67	22
Any good Govt.	5	2.28	2	1.11	7
Democracy	200	90.90	153	85	353
Total	220	100	180	100	400

Now instead of Khullakpa, the Pradhan or the councilor deals in all the matters. In modern political system they preferred democracy as the most suitable one. Though majority express qualities like honesty and efficiency of the candidate as more important regardless of the political party he / she is standing for. But all of them showed a tendency or inclination towards supporting any candidate from their respective village / municipal area. Majority of them feel that the political members are not working for the development of the Scheduled Caste as a whole but are interested more in personal benefits and of their constituency.

V.1. e. Religion

Religion is a system of communally experienced beliefs and practices oriented toward some supernatural transcendent realm. Religion is found in all human societies, and in many it exerts a dominant influence on social action (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 240).

Religion is a set of beliefs, symbols, and practices which is based on the idea of the sacred, and which unites believers into a socio-religious community. The sacred is contrasted with the profane because it involves feelings of awe. Sociologists have defined religion by reference to the sacred rather than to a belief in a God or Gods, because it makes social comparison possible (Marshall 1994:562).

Giddens (2001: 531-2) explains that religion involves a set of symbols, invoking feelings of reverence or awe, and are linked to rituals or ceremonials (such as church services) engaged in by a community of believers. The rituals associated with religion are very diverse. Ritual acts may include praying, chanting, singing, eating certain kinds of food- or refraining from doing so- fasting on certain days, and so on.

Religion in India has not only been tradition of worship, it also controlled the entire community life. Valmiki says that even the tribals were obliged to regulate their

food habits along with prescriptions of their religion. No tribal society could have lived without religion(Doshi and Jain 2002: 285).

In the state of Manipur, to the royal will of *Pamheiba*, the monarch in whose reign the fortunes of the State reached their Zenith, Hinduism owes its present position as the official religion of the State. At first the decrees of the King received but little obedience, and the opposition to the change centered mainly round the numerous members of the royal family who were supported, not unnaturally, by the maibas, the priests of the older religion. Religious dissent was treated with the same ruthless severity as was meted out to political opponents and wholesale banishments and execution drove the people into acceptance of the tenets of Hinduism (Hodson 1908: 95)

The Lois have preserved and retained the pure tradition and culture of the Meiteis. They are the worshippers of traditional Meitei Gods, the '*Imung Lais*' (refers to the traditional deities believed to be in the household), the '*Lam Lais*' (refers to the deities believed to exist in the wild land) '*Umang Lais*' (refers to the deities believed to be in the forest) and '*Apokpa*' (ancestors). The '*Umang Lais*' and '*Apokpas*' are different from one community to another and from one clan to another clan. But the main Gods of the whole Meiteis that is, Lois and Hindu Meiteis are '*Guru Sidaba*' '*Sanamahi*' and '*Leimaren*'. The difference between the Lois and Hindu Meiteis is that the Lois worship only the Meitei Gods while the Hindu Meiteis worship and practice both the Meitei Gods and as well as the Hindu Gods. The present practice of Meitei religion by the Los is also slightly different from the '*Sanamahi cult*' of Meitei revivalism. Though, there is similarity in principle between the indigenous religion of Lois and the Sanamahi cult, the actual practice of the two is different (Bino 2002: 46-47).

Regarding the different religious practices found among the respondents, the majority of respondents in Thoubal and Bishnupur districts are followers of Hinduism /

Vaisnavism. Here, 3% (12) have converted to Christianity and thus have different ways of practicing their rituals. And 0.75% (3) are followers of indigenous religion. Sanamahi or Meitei cult is followed by 9.75% (39) of them. They differ distinctively in their practices and rituals from Hindu Meitei. They do not idolize Hindu Gods and Goddesses but worship indigenous Gods like *Guru Sidaba*, *Sanamahi*, *Leimaren Pakangba*, *Emoinu*, *Apokpa* etc. In any ritual instead of Sanskrit mantras stories based on Meitei Gods and Goddesses and legends are chanted as hymns and a particular leaf called '*Tairen*' (scientific name is *cedrela toona*) is used for purification instead of '*Tulsi*' (Basil) plant. Likewise the items to be offered, the specific day for the ceremony also differs. And the person propitiating the rituals is always a '*Maiba*' (priest) as Brahmins are not hired either for ritual or for cooking purpose. While 36.5% (146) are adherent followers of Hinduism and along with that they also worship the indigenous Gods as they are the household deities of every Meitei family. And in Imphal East and Imphal West districts indigenous religion followers are predominant. Among them 1.75% (7) have converted to Christianity. Sanamahi cult is professed by 6.5% (26) of them and 4.25% (17) have adapted to Hinduism while 37.5% (150) profess the indigenous religion.

Almost all the Hindu followers (163) hire Brahmin for religious purposes and among them seven of them practice both Hinduism and indigenous religion and thus, hire both Brahmin and Maiba (priest) accordingly. While the indigenous (153) and Sanamahi cult (65) followers in all the four districts employ local Maiba (priest) for officiating their rituals. The Christian converts (19) have different practices and so do not require any of them (Table V. 11).

Table V. 11
Religious Profile of the respondents

District		Indigenous	Hindu Meitei	Christian	Sanamahi	Total
Bishnupur	Urban	0	0	0	0	0
	Rural	3	76	5	16	100
	Total	3	76	5	16	100
Imphal East	Urban	72	2	3	3	80
	Rural	5	2	0	13	20
	Total	77	4	3	16	100
Imphal West	Urban	28	1	1	0	30
	Rural	45	12	3	10	70
	Total	73	13	4	10	100
Thoubal	Urban	0	49	4	17	70
	Rural	0	21	3	6	30
	Total	0	70	7	23	100
Total		153	163	19	65	400

All of them, except the Christianized ones offer prayers to '*Kourou*' (Sun) in the morning with flowers and incense sticks and to '*Sanamahi*' and '*Leimaren*' in the evening. The same thing is followed with elaborateness and by idolizing Hindu Gods by Hindu followers. The people of Andro (Imphal East) believe in '*Panam Ningthou*' to be the protector of the whole village. They worship nature and ancestors. The practices of Hindu Meitei are somewhat different from '*Sanamahi cult*' though both of them refrain from employing of wine and meat at rituals and religious purposes. While in the indigenous religion the whole process starting from the various items offered, ways of ritual practices, language used for hymns, etc. remarkably differ from the Hindu Meitei practices. In indigenous ritual instead of Brahmin the person officiating every ritual is the '*Maiba*' (priest) in which offerings are being made to their ancestral deities and other indigenous deities.

Regarding the celebration of several festivals, 4.75% celebrate Christmas, New Year, Good Friday, Easter etc as they have converted to Christianity. While the vast majority of 95.25% (381) respondents celebrate festivals like *Cheiraoba*, *Ningol Chakouba*, *Ashiman thaba / Tarpon*, *Emoinu*, *Yaosang / Holi*, *Panthoibi Puja / Durga*

Puja, Diwali etc. Some of the above mentioned festivals are celebrated strongly for religious beliefs while others are observed mostly by the younger generation just for fun.

In all the four districts only 2% (8) of them from Imphal East, Imphal West (rural) and Thoubal (urban) have experienced '*Panathokpa*' (becoming Hindu Meitei) in one way or the other. Among them two old aged men narrated that a group of King's men called as '*Brahma Sabha*' used to conduct purification ritual on those who wish to follow Hinduism. The purified / panathokpa have to pay an '*anna*' (paisa) to the '*Sabha*'. According to an old aged man the whole village of the Yaithibi, the present Thoubal Khunou village was purified by the Brahmin sent by the King Buddhachandra during his reign around 1956-57. The Brahmin sprinkled tulsi water and chanted few mantras which they called '*harinaam*' and the same mantras were to be chanted by those who were being purified as instructed by the Brahmin. No title or position was awarded after the purification except that, they were purified and were permitted to mingle with other Hindus and thus, they were eventually considered as higher in status to their counterparts who have not undergone the purification.

Except for the 2% respondents mentioned above, the other 50.25% (201) of them have admitted that they have heard of the word '*Panathokpa*' but they do not have any knowledge of the process and its prevalence while 47.75% (191) have neither heard of the word '*Panathokpa*' nor have any idea of it.

All the hundred respondents of Thoubal district, regardless of the urban-rural differences, do not believe in the hierarchy of religions. From the districts of Bishnupur, Imphal East and Imphal West 11.3% (34) of them consider their indigenous religion as greater and pure as they are preserving and practicing the original religion. They also added that they do not consider other religions as lower either. Sanamahi religion is regarded as more pure by 1.3% (4) of them. To 1.7% (5), Hinduism is the most

pure religion and kept it in a much higher position as they strictly observe pollution and purity regarding use of meat and wine etc. Again, 1.3% (4) accounted their indigenous religion as lower to the Hindu religion. While all the other 84.3% (253) do not believe in the hierarchy of religion and expressed that all religions are equal in status.

According to the opinion of 99% (396) respondents differences are inevitable among Scheduled Castes. Similarly, slight variance in the way of performing rituals, beliefs, customary practices etc also prevail from one place to another among Scheduled Castes though the degree of variation cannot be minutely specified. 1% (4) had no knowledge and thus not commented anything.

In all the four districts 40.75% (163) of the respondents have sanskritized their ways of life by adopting Hinduism while 2% (8) of them have not actually sanskritized but shows some flexibility in terms of marriage and in other ceremonies, considering their mixed settlement in the area. And 57.25% (229) have not sanskritized their ways of life. But, ironically all of them whether sanskritized or non-sanskritized observed pollution for women during menstruation, childbirth etc.

V.1.f. Law

Law imposes formal control on society by setting forth specific rules of conduct, planned sanctions to support these rules, and designated officials to make, interpret, and enforce the rules (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 155). Customary laws are social practices that have the force of legal codes. Law in this sense is the result of common usage, not of legislation, and it is generally considered to be the laymen's rules concerning matters of everyday life (ibid: 154).

In Maclver's (1945) terminology law is the institution corresponding to the association known as the state. Max Weber (1919) defines it as "that human association

which within a definite sphere... successfully claims the monopoly of legitimate physical force”.

Laws are rules of action or statutes established by authorities. After independence, the Constitution of India prescribed protection and safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes with the object of removing their social disabilities and promoting their varied interests. The important ones are- abolition of untouchability, protection from social injustice and various forms of exploitation, removal of restrictions on access to shops, wells, roads, institutions etc (Ahuja 1993: 369).

All of them were aware of the facilities provided by the government such as grants, loans, educational facilities etc though they could not exactly pronounce the percentage reserved for them. But very few were aware of the various laws safeguarding the Scheduled Castes. For their lack of knowledge they justified by expressing that they have not felt the need for such laws as they are not victimized by such atrocities and discrimination.

Except for the two men (0.5%) of Kakching in Thoubal (urban) who have heard of the protective laws but could not name them while other 99.5% (398) respondents from all the four districts have similarly responded that, except for the various grants and provisions given to them in the form of cash and kinds they were not aware of the laws enacted for scheduled caste protection. And the reason they attributed for their lack of knowledge is due to the absence of any such situation of atrocities whereby they require such protective laws to be implemented.

According to them elders of the community including Panchayat members or Councilor or the elders of the conflicting families discuss and deal with any socio-economic, political or religious conflicts. Pursuing for court depends on the nature of the conflict otherwise they resolve it within the community itself. In Sangaitel village of

Imphal West they form a committee called 'Lai-Committee' which comprises of twenty seven members of different clans. The norms formed by this committee are strictly abided by all villagers in every matter.

Their total lack of awareness of the various safeguarding laws is either because of the lack of exposure to the outside world or due to the absence of atrocities and discriminations against them. Any form of conflict within or between the village or municipal area are dealt by the elders and the Panchayat members and the Councilor of the concerned places.

CASE STUDY

Ningthoujam Awangjao

Male, Age- 70, Married

Literate but can read and write only the original Meitei script.

Phayeng

Imphal West District.

Awangjao is a cultivator and also earns some extra income by working as a maiba (priest). His wife is a housewife and has four children who are married and are still living together. From his father's time his family has been adopted to Hinduism but he still continues to practice his indigenous rituals of being a Loi. He said that his parent's last rites/shraddha was officiated by a Brahman as it was his father's wish and his grandmother was a Hindu Meitei. He practices the indigenous ritual because he believes that it is the most pure religion of Meitei and above that he, being a maiba (priest) has to officiate in any indigenous ritual. He learnt the priesthood profession from Pandit Kullachandra of Govindaji temple and he was given sana mohor (metal coin), a symbol of permitting the priesthood profession. Such honour was rare in those days and was considered prestigious. His parent's adoption to Hinduism did not change much in their lives. He recalled that when he was eight years old, around 1940 (during war with Japan) when the concept of pollution and purity was at its peak, some Hindu Meitei women from Imphal took shelter in their village to hide from the war and military. These women were fetching water from the same pond where he was swimming. He took a pot which was near him and started swimming for which he was badly scolded and his parents were made to buy a new pot for polluting it. His parents did not say anything and obeyed what they were told to do.

As no one raised a word or protested against it or any incidence happened, he thought that it must be a strict norm not to touch anything or mingle with those who came from outside his village. He honestly felt that it was a set rule of the society which everyone should follow, as he was not at all aware of the concept of high caste or low caste. He also recalled the incidents where the king's men use to beat and torture those who offended the king's rules and order. He said that, though his family has been adopted to Hinduism since long time back but he still strongly believe in his indigenous religion and is strictly following it.

V. Conclusions

In both the Loi and Yaithibi community agriculture is still the major source of livelihood. They are involved in diverse activities of weaving, fishing, animal husbandry etc. Brewing is not practiced strictly on religious grounds by the Loies and Yaithibis of Thoubal district and the Panathokpa families of Andro Khunou and of Khurkhul in Imphal East and Imphal West district respectively. Otherwise brewing liquor is another vital source of income for the Loies in Manipur. It is done for both religious and commercial requirements. For agricultural activities some of them have started utilizing hired tractors and fertilizers but very few of them could afford to own. They are still employing the traditional methods for brewing, pottery, silk rearing and weaving.

Due to lack of irrigation system and modern equipments large scale production is impossible. It is only in places like Sekmai and Kakching which have organized market where as other Scheduled Castes areas have to either go to the market in the nearby village/town or have to wait for the middle person to collect the goods. Such lack of proper place for trading and business hinders in the path of development for the Scheduled Caste economically as well as socially.

Saving money is a distant dream for many as many of them are struggling for their daily needs. At times of need they have to depend totally on money lenders. Except for a few of them who are sound financially, the bulk of population is suffering from severe financial problems.

Whatever traditional callings in which they are involved into are wholly their choice and are not based on their caste. Now they have realized education to be the most valued means for achieving status and a good post leading to upward mobility. So a good number of parents are admitting their children in English private schools instead of government run schools. But again all of them are not fortunate enough to avail it due to financial constraints. Temporary migration to Imphal and outside the state for the purpose

of pursuing education has been an increasing phenomena and such temporary migration outside the state is more prominent in Sekmai, Kakching, Phayeng as compared to other Scheduled Caste areas. Only some among them are able to avail the educational benefits like post-matric scholarship, reservation in government institutions and this may be because of inefficiency by the beneficiary himself / herself or biased attitude of the agency. Certain factors like lack of financial source, lack of time, since they have to spend the whole day in heavy field work to earn for a living, and proper communication also comes in the way of availing educational benefits.

Presently the role of Khullakpa and his officers have reduced to advisors in religious ceremony such as Lai Haraoba and in other village rituals. The main functions of the village / municipal developmental area are presently looked after by the pradhan and councilor respectively. Though most of them wanted a sincere and honest politician irrespective of party preferences but someone from their own village is mostly preferred. Many of them feel that only elected political representative like late. Kh. Chaoba and other early representatives have honestly struggled for them while the other Scheduled Castes politicians are biased and do not think for the upliftment of the Scheduled Caste as a whole. Democratic form of government which values equality and freedom is the most preferred one.

The Lois have retained the pure (indigenous) tradition and culture of the Meiteis for which they consider themselves to be the pure Meitei. The indigenous God 'Sanamahi' and 'Leimaren Sidabi' are the common God and Goddess of all Meiteis in Manipur irrespective of religious differences. This is the reason for the commonness in some of the basic ritual observed by the Lois and the Hindu Meiteis. The practices of the Hindu Meitei and Sanamahi cult are not similar though both refrain from use of meat and wine in any religious ritual. In certain situation like inter-caste marriages the indigenous

follower hire a Brahman to which the Hindu Meitei or Brahman have no complaints. There is no emphasis on strict hierarchy of religion and consider all religions as equal in status. Among the Scheduled Castes themselves according to one place to another slight variation in the performances of rituals and customary practices exist. Pollution of women during menstruation, childbirth etc. are commonly observed by the sanskritized as well as non-sanskritized Lois and Yaithibis.

They are aware of the various provisions granted to them but they have no knowledge of different laws safeguarding the Scheduled Castes. They lack much awareness and above that they have not experienced any serious ill-treatment for which they need to rely on such laws. In matters of any socio-economic or religious conflict the village elders and the panchayat member / councilor are primarily consulted.

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