

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE AMONG THE NAGAS' : A CASE OF VISWEMA**Dr. Md. Maqbul Ali¹,**

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Abstract

Change is an ever present phenomenon. There are changes in almost every aspect of life including social, political, and world view. Social institution like education system, marriage, economy, religion, occupation, etc has undergone tremendous changes with the advent of Christianity and modern education. Viswema have a comparatively higher literacy as against other bordering villages. Almost all families send their wards to school and colleges. Every year, most girls and boys leave the village to other cities of the country in order to pursue higher education. The health statuses of the villagers are better than ever before. In the past villagers followed traditional healthcare system and had belief in some divine power. But at present such beliefs and practices are very rare among them. In the past, people performed the marriage rites and rituals through traditional belief system but with the advent of Christianity, the traditional believes, custom and practices are less practiced. The Church, besides teaching Bible also acts as an instrument to educate people of their social obligations towards the society.

Key Words: Change, Continuity, Economy, Education, Religion**INTRODUCTION:**

Sociologists have explored the questions of change largely by the close analysis of particular change processes and by refining definitions. The ramification of any particular social change is endless and unpredictable, but all can be understood as social adjustment to some failure or dysfunction within the social organism. Niel J.Smelser (1965) conceptualizes social change as 'value-added' process, in which a number of conditions or stages are sequentially combined before eventually producing a particular social change. The Marxist theory of change is more pro-active, focusing on the ability of human beings to influence their own fates through political action. Daniel Bell's (1972) gives an interesting turn to the conflict perspective by suggesting that change in the modern world arises out of the tensions between three 'realms' of social reality which operate on different principles and move towards different goals: the techno-economic structure (science, industry and economy), the political system, and culture. 19th century theorists saw change as a total, homogeneous process, where every aspects of society would change together. In the modern world we are aware that society is never static and that social, political, economic and cultural changes occur constantly. Society is influenced by many forces and factors that irresistibly cause changes.

This work intends to study the Social Change among the Angami Nagas society with special reference to Viswema village of Kohima District in Nagaland. With the fast changing world there

is no enough evidence of the past written records about the village. There was not enough anthropological study of the village. The work mainly focuses on comparison between the past and present scenario. To highlight village as the most important entity in the lives of the people and to show continuity of traditions within the institutional structure despite the factor and aspect of change brought about by modernization, urbanization, and educational system.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Rawat H.K (2010) deals with the basic principles of sociology on social structure and its changes. It reveals that society is definite dynamic; any changes in the environmental circumstances change the character of the society. Even the most stable society undergoes changes. Some element are added or replaced and others become modifies or are lost contact with other culture, invention or discovery brings new element into the culture of a society. This book also focuses considerably on factors of social change whether it may be physical, environment, demographic factor, cultural factor, economic factor, political factor. The involvement of individuals and elites towards societal change are significantly put through in the process of socialisation.

Horam M (1977) offer an intimate study of the Tangkhuls; one of the leading tribes among the Nagas. This book draws an extensive field study, observation and experience depicting Tangkhul science in totality. It highlights several aspects of traditional, social and cultural life and also the recent changes in the norms and customs. This work includes the Tangkhul myth and ballad. Horam (1998) study the society at a time when the Nagas were undergoing a tremendous change with the dawn of modernity. This book serves two purposes, firstly to update the existing knowledge on the fascinating races and secondly it re-examines the Naga society and its culture .Here the author systematically stratifies the Naga society in two calling the space 'generation gap'. The author view is based on the state of conflict between the values of traditional and modernity. At first, the author gives a historical representative of the Nagas, secondly the author embarks the journey of Christianity and its impact, thirdly the author determines the values of modernity and its aspect.

Mann, R.S (1989) aims at analyzing and interpreting the diverse aspects of tribal social structure in the context of change. The positive as well as the negative impacts, on the life and culture of the tribal's, of fast grown culture contact and acculturation are discussed in specific tribal situations. The direction in which the contemporary tribal society is heading, and the concerned ongoing and underlying processes have been studied with a view to delineate certain issues of immediate concern to applied social anthropologists and sociologists, as also to those who are engaged in reshaping the destiny of tribal's in terms of development. Of vital importance are some specific problems, concerning tribal life and culture, which have been highlighted for action-oriented agents of change. The contents of this book run into two distinct perspectives.

Longkumer Jungmayanla (2009), work is based on the study of one village in Ao area of Mokokchung district. It was a case study which attempts to identify the local differences even among Ao. The author tries to prove that there are variations of institutions in village. But the significances are by no means diminished. A necessary step in understanding the different tribe of Nagaland divided among the local variation is to study the local types. This work attempt to highlight the continuity of traditions through various institutions as found in the village despite the forces of changes. Renu Suri (2006) provides a comprehensive account of the physical characteristics of the Angami Nagas –one of the major and important Naga tribes of Nagaland.

This book attempt to reflect on the Ethnic position of the Angamis by comparing their physical traits with those of the other major tribes of North-East India, namely *Khasis, Mishings, Kacharis*, and others as also with some of the Asiatic Mongoloids such as the *Tibetans, Uzbeks, Buriats, Limbus, Newars and Lepchas* for a wider perspective. Kanwar Randip Singh (1987) is an outcome of author experience and observation, this book gives a picture of ghastly deeds and blood curdling stories about Naga heroes of peace who gave their life for the cause of peace in Nagaland. This book also gives a picture of Naga way of life, their customs, social life and forces at work in them after the British left India. Hokishe Sema (1986) trace out the origins of Nagas, their contact with the British, the missionaries and the political, social, economic transformation of Nagaland and the future of Nagas. The book focuses about the past Nagas starting from the days of their grotesque existence to the present day status of a fully fledged state of Nagaland and in contact with the Christian missionaries hoisted the cross over their totems.

AREA OF STUDY:

Viswema village is one of the largest villages in Southern Angami region with 37sq km in Jakhama circle of Kohima district of Nagaland. It is at an altitude of 1570 in meters from sea level. The village has population of 7417 of which 3576 are males while 3841 are females as per population census 2011. There is a total of 1369 household in the village.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The study focuses on the changing patterns of social institutions and transition from tradition to modernity among the Nagas with special reference to Viswema village. The basic objectives of the study are as follows:

- To find out change and continuity in traditions
- To study the role of education in the process of Change
- To explore the role of religion in the change process
- To examine the economic and other social institutions.

METHODOLOGY:

The study is mainly based on the primary and secondary sources of data. In the absence of in-depth study and recorded data about the region, extensive field study has been done to collect first-hand information about the common traditional values which are still dearly upheld by the people. A sample size of 50 household has been selected as a sample on sequence basis selecting every 13th household. The sample size is represent able and gives sixty percent confidence level. Secondary data include the articles from journals, books, research works, and reports.

Research Tool:

The following research tool has been employed in the survey:

Interview Schedule: Thirty (30) questions was developed for the purpose of collection of data through interview and observation method. Question was in structured form and was printed in English. The questions were open-ended. As a part of data collection discussion, Observation was also used as supporting tools.

Personal Interview and observation: Personal notes and tape recorder were used.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

Due to limited period of time, it was not possible to cover all households of Viswema village. Secondly there was no proper anthropological study of the village. This led us to adopt oral sources to trace the authenticity.

HISTORY AND THE SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS:

In the absence of any written document, the origin of Viswema is still shrouded in mystery. The history of the village as orally passed on from one generation to another. Oral history highlights that Viswema ancestors first settled at a place called “*Mekhroma*”(Mekhremei). Perhaps they came from or via the far east. With the passing of time and perhaps due to increase in population or the need to find better settlement, a person by name “*Tenyi-u*” with some of the inhabitants reportedly moved to an adjoining area which was called after him as “*Tenyiphe*”. It is said that it was from “*Tenyiphe*” that the populace is said to have further dispersed to various direction, of which a group comprising the ancestors of the village moved towards the west to “*Kezol-tsa*” which is located below the southern gorge of the “*Te-m-pu*” range. The ancestors of “*Viswema*” moved on through a narrow pass at “*Kezol-tsa*” which is popular known as “*Viswe Kharu*” (Viswema gate) and after crossing the *Khizhoke* ridge, moved down towards the slopes of “*Teyozwu*” and settled down at “*Kipizwu*”, a place overlooking the present day village. With the passing of time, the people moved down to the present location of the village and named the settlement as “*Viswema*” thereafter.

Social Organization:

The basic social unit is the exogamous patrilineal clan (*thino*), though the clan has been superseded by the kindred (*putsa*). Individual identity is bound chiefly to these groups. Clan and kindred are responsible for the behaviour of constituent members. Social status is reflected in the roofing of houses. Prestige can be attained by the collection of trophies in war and in sponsorship of festivals. Status may also be based on a person's individual clan membership.

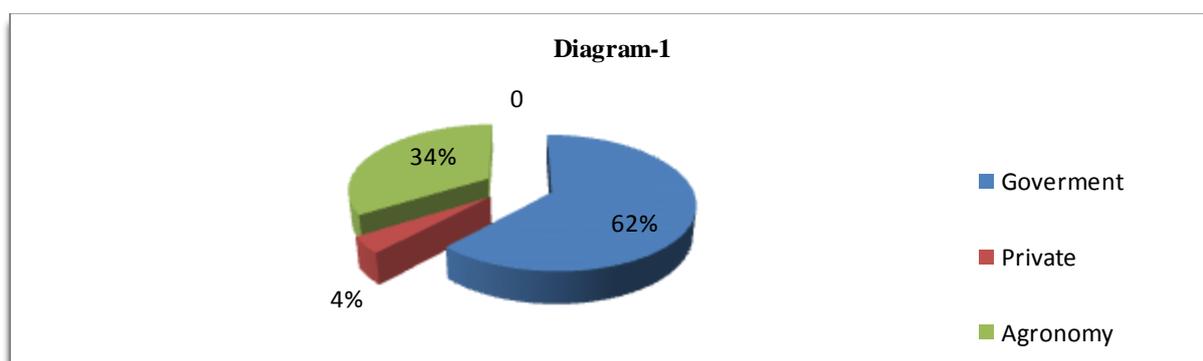
Conflicts are resolved within Viswema villages by a Council of elders who discuss matters of dispute among themselves, with the parties involved and with the general public, until some resolution is reached. Issues centring on tribal custom are usually referred to the older men of a clan. Factual questions are decided by oath, and the authority of the oath particularly when one party swears by the lives of family and clan members is rarely questioned.

Political Organization:

A council of elder's functions as the administrative authority in a village, and individuals with grievances may voice them at council meetings. Chiefs are also part of the political structure of the village but the delimitation of their powers varies among the several Naga tribes. The government appoints village officials today. In Viswema village, these are called *Gaonburas* and their authority and responsibilities are similar to those of the village Chieftains (*pehumas*) of the past. The office of the *Gaonbura* is not hereditary. The same was true, in most cases, of that of the *Pehuma*. The *Gaonbura's* major administrative responsibility is the collection of the house tax, though he may also act on behalf of his villagers. The *Pehuma* exercised most influence in the conduct of war, the settlement of disputes within the village being delegated to the elders' council.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES:

The economy of Viswema is primarily agriculture. The people have been practicing terrace cultivation. Agricultural systems are mostly based on traditional, cultural and socio-economic factors. The villagers are very deeply attached to nature and that their life is integrally interwoven with the environment. Today, most people are still farmers, producing most of the food and many other things they need themselves. They practice two types of farming: wet rice cultivation on terraced fields and shifting cultivation. Although rice is the most important crop for the people, they cultivate a large number of other crops such as maize, millets and other cereals, yam, potatoes and other roots crops, and a large number of vegetables and spices. These are grown in shifting cultivation fields and home gardens. Forests also are still an important provider of wood and other building materials, herbs and wild vegetables, honey and game.



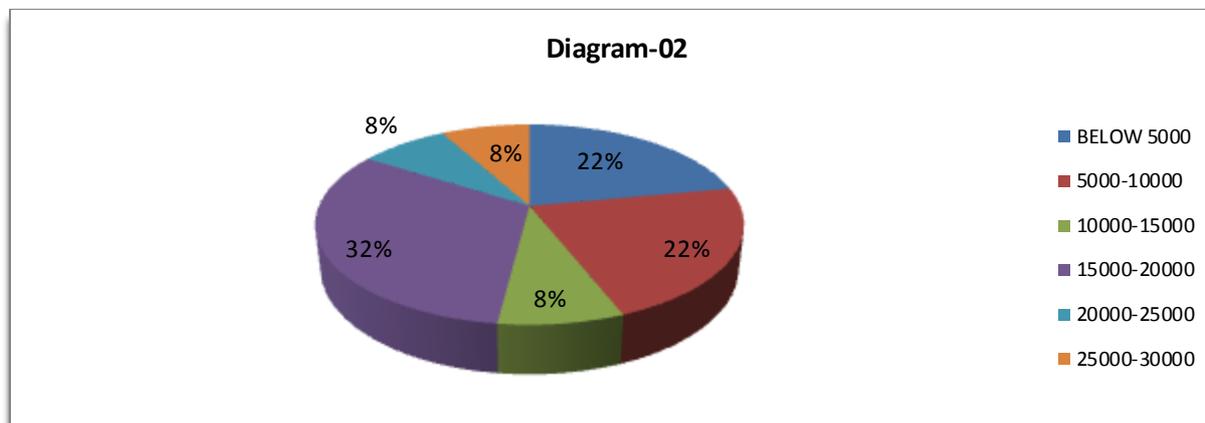
(Diagram showing occupational chart)

It was found that 62% were engaged in Government job, 4% were involved in privates and 34% of the people were engaged in agriculture. In Viswema, most of the People were engaged in government job which serve as the main source of economy. A good number of the people live in towns, work as clerks or administrators in offices, as Teachers, or nurses, medical doctors, lawyers or in other professions. Many Viswema residents have migrated to urban centres like Dimapur, Kohima etc, in search of jobs, or to take care of their children who attend schools there. There was lack of private company or industry apart from the private Educational Institution as a result there is less percentage of people engaged in private activities.

Spinning and weaving are performed by woman and every Viswemi woman is supposed to weave the clothes of her family. Until recently, it was essential that every marriageable girl should know how to weave. Weaving in Viswema village is exclusive monopoly of woman. There are several varieties of cloths worn by Viswemi such as *Loramhoushu*, *Lohe*, *Phichu-pfe* and *Ratapfe*. Women weave traditional clothes for their own use as well as for business purpose. These days, the government is providing various schemes loans to tribal weavers in cash or in kinds. Woman plays a significant role within and outside the family. She works in the fields, collects fuel and fodder from the jungle, carries water and looks after the children and domestic animals and weaves shawls and other clothes for sale and use. Most of them save money used for family maintenance and children's education.

Animal husbandry plays an important role in rural economy. It is an integral part of the livelihoods of the various ethnic groups. Livestock rearing has been an important source of livelihood for small farmers. Large farmers depend on animal husbandry for their livelihood in addition to supplying milk, meat, eggs and serve as a major source of power. Almost every home rears pigs, as they provide meat and provide source of income. Traditionally, Bee keeping is also

practice by the people of Viswema village in crude wooden or log hives but in an unscientific and crude method. At present the villagers had set up their group as Viswema Village Beekeeping Honey Mission Committee. Nagaland Beekeeping and Honey Mission are helping them by providing scientifically designed hives to Bee keeping society to promote the beekeeping. They used honey product for themselves as well as for sell in the market to earn an additional income for themselves.

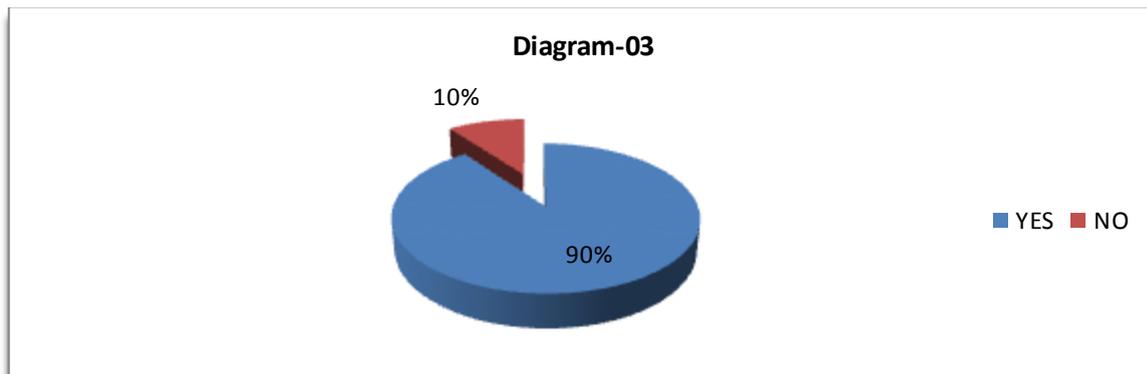


(Diagram of Monthly Income)

It was found that majority of the population of Viswema village, were engaged in agriculture production and where agriculture serve as the main source of income. It was found out that most of the families of the village were earning more than 15,000 with 32% of the total population as monthly income. 22% of the total families are having more than 5000 rupees per month, as well as 22% of the families are earning less than below 5000. only 8% of the total families earn more than 20,000 as monthly income. With the development of government institution and offices, there is a trend of people preference over government jobs rather than occupation based on agriculture and allied activities.

RELIGION:

The people of Viswema were superstitious by nature in the early period. It holds the ethical value and regulates the behaviour of life. There were fears that evil afflicts them unless the first drop of rice bear or the first pinch of rice is set aside for the spirit. Housewife would not wash the utensils with remains as there was a popular belief that poverty will be brought to their family. The village will never dare to whistle in the night for it is believes that it bring evil spirit. While a bride is proceeding to the bridegroom's residence, she has to be careful from stumbling, because it is regarded as very bad omen for her future life. One cannot dismantle or reconstruct or re-decorate a graveyard except on a particular day so fixed for the purpose which is done once in a year. The funeral meat is to be fully distributed away before sunset in order to enable the spirit of the dead to reach abode of the spirits on the same day. When the spirit of the dead cannot reach its destination the same day, it will remain back in the village and their fear was that such presence may cause disturbance to the family and friends. But with the advent of Christianity, the superstitious beliefs have been evaded.

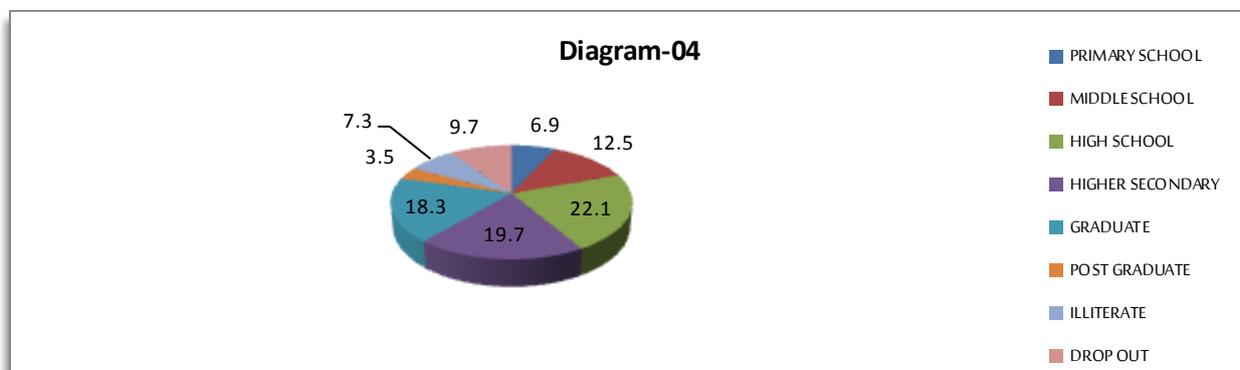


(Diagram showing believes in custom & tradition)

Survey gives a picture of continuity of custom and tradition even after converted to Christian. It was found out that 90% of the Viswema village believe in custom and tradition and only 10% of the people do not believe in custom and traditions. With the coming of Christian missionary, it also open the way for other Christian denomination, the present generation is divided into Baptist, Catholics and Revival. The people of Viswema about 99 percent are Christians and it would not be long before the whole population become Christians when all the elders who hold on to their traditional religion passed away. With the advent of modern education and exposure to the outside world, they now dress up their speech and behaviour in the clothes of Christian life but underneath they are the same people with some attached goals fully recognizable from within their traditional culture. It is within this culture that people hold on to their traditional values. There are many areas of continuity such as, village administration, shawl presentation on the occasion of marriage or death, giving the meat share to the in-laws etc, for instance fear of the evil spirit harming them are not completely erased from their belief system. There are many mountains, stones, lakes, streams, trees that the people believed are still possessed by the evil spirit which they believe that demolishing them or even trespassing will invite dire consequences in the form of sickness or even dead.

EDUCATION:

If we compare with the earlier educational status to the present scenario of the village, it reveals that there is a huge progress in education. At present there is increased level of graduate and Post Graduate in the village. As the society progress with the intervention of globalization and urbanization, most of the parents are aware of the importance of sending their children to school or colleges.



(Diagram of Educational qualification of Viswema village)

It was found that the literacy rate is high in Viswema village. The literacy rate among the high school categories is highest (22.1%) compared to other categories followed by higher secondary level with 19.7%, the percentage of illiteracy with 7.3% and percentage of drop-out with 9.3% which are comparatively average. This may be due to financial problem as well as inadequate government support in the field of education. Among the mentioned categories only 3.5% are post graduate which constitute very less number of people in the village, this reason may be due to lack of educational institution in the nearby areas as well as due to lack of economic facilities among the village. In order to remove the problem of illiteracy and drop-out, help and guidance should be provided. Government schemes and programmes in the field of education must be made aware to the people because education provides knowledge and skills which enables an individual to operate ideally in the society. It can bring progress and contribute to its efficient functioning of society

MARRIAGE:

There are two forms of marriage which are basically ceremonial and non-ceremonial. The ceremonial form is desired as a symbol of status and consists of an elaborate ritual involving the services of a marriage broker, the taking of omens and the negotiation of a marriage price (usually nominal). The non-ceremonial form involves the taking of a woman to the house of a man where they remain *kenna* (forbidden) for three days. Divorce is allowed and is common. The divorcee and widowed are permitted to remarry. Polygamy is not allowed and woman is allowed free choice in the selection of mates. Among the Viswemi, a young man having chosen a certain girl tells his father and sends a friend to ascertain the wishes of his parents. If they express conditional approval, the bridegroom's father puts the matter further test by strangling a fowl and watching the way in which it crosses its legs when dying. If the legs are placed in an inauspicious attitude, the match is immediately broken off. Otherwise the girl is informed of the favourable progress of negotiation. At this stage, she can exercise a power of veto, as if she dreams an inauspicious dream within the next three days, her suitor must search a bride elsewhere, if all goes favourably the wedding day is fixed. Proceeding is begun with a feast at the bride's house and in the evening she proceeds to her husband home, but though she sleeps there, he modestly retires to the bachelor's club. The next day brings more feasting, but night separates the couple as before. On the third day, they visit their fields together, when the third day elapsed the happy pair can be allowed consummating their wishes.

During the survey, it was found that 68% of the respondent was married by arrangement and 32% were married through elopement. With the coming of Christianity people are more attached to religious ceremonial type of marriage rather than breaking religious values and morals. At the same time, elopement is also prevalent because when their relationship was not welcome by their parents they eloped away or may be due to poor economic status which they cannot afford for their wedding. Christian weddings traditional presents were exchanged that were common in the old belief system. Such signs of the old traditions can still be found even today.

HEALTH STATUS:

Health plays an important role in the process of economic and social development and improving the quality of life of its citizens. So it is important to study the health issues in the society because proper health care is needed in order to sustain. In the past there were not proper health care facilities in the village and there was less medical professional so they preferred traditional herb or medicines as a result many people used to die even of curable diseases. But with the passage of time the concepts of disease, cure, health hazard, epidemic and their belief system also changes. There is a vast change of health practices among Viswema

people because of health education, community health Centres and dispensaries came into action. It was found that there was 100% awareness regarding the spread of HIV/AIDS virus. It has been found that most of the villagers are educated and this serve as the main source of spreading awareness, People also came to know through awareness programmed conducted by NSACS and as well as through different mass media like television, internet, radio, newspaper etc.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION:

It can be clearly concluded from the analysis and findings that Viswema village underwent a series of changes in comparison to the past. Social institution like marriage, economy, religion, occupation, education etc underwent tremendous changes. There have been changes in almost every aspect of life including their social, political, and world view, as the people now have more or less continuous contact with the outside world. They are no longer immune from dynamic changes in their surroundings.

From the field study, it was found that good number of families depends on agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood. The household survey depicts that 78% of the population earn more than Rs.5000 (five thousand) and 22% of the respondent are earning below 5000. Some of the factors behind their poor economic status are:

- Practice of Primitive Method of cultivation.
- Lack of employment in Private Institution.
- Insufficient access to market
- Inadequate Education.

If we compare to the past, there is a trend of change in occupation and income, though there is relatively good number of people earning less. The literacy rate among the high school categories is highest (22.1%) compared to other categories followed by higher secondary level with 19.7%, the percentage of illiteracy with 7.3% and percentage of drop-out with 9.3% are also comparatively low, only 3.5% are post graduate which constitute very less number of people. There is a pattern of change in Education, now most of the people are aware of the importance of education. Almost all the families are having school and college going student. Every year, Most of the girls and boys leave their villages for far away cities in India to take up higher education. Viswema have a high literacy rate and education level compared to other bordering Villages. The health status of the villagers are better than the earlier, In the past people followed Traditional Healthcare system and believed that some people possess a divine power to foresee, They are thus considered or regarded as physicians those days when there were no doctors nor physicians to be consulted. But at present such beliefs and practices are very rare among them.

There is a change of marriage system in the Village. In the past, people performed the marriage rites and rituals through their traditional way of believers and practices, but at present it has found out that there is a change of marriage system due to coming of Christianity, the traditional believes, custom and practices became to vanished and it completely ushered the people a new way of outlook and lifestyle. As time went on, people began to view western religion and culture as superior and more acceptable. It caused people to abandon many of their own songs, dances, festivals, dress, religious practices and prayers. It can be clearly concluded that with the coming of Christianity, there have been changes in almost every aspects of life including their social, political, and world view, as the people now have more or less continuous contact with the outside world. The traditional religion, which was known as '*Tsana*' remains only as folklore for

the present younger generation of the Viswema Village. But in spite of changes in religion, from the field survey it was found out that with 100% Christian, villagers still continue the previous beliefs and practices. With the advent of modern education and exposure to the outside world; they now follow Christian life and behaviour but underneath they are the same people with some attached goals fully recognizable from within their traditional culture. It is within this culture that people hold on to their traditional values giving them a sense of unity and belongingness, making them to realise the importance of their unique culture. The traditional festivals, symbols, and meanings of nature continue to have an important place in the present Viswema village. The impact of Christianity among the village has brought a sea of change. The Christian faith is rooted so strong that there is no intention of going back to their traditional religion. The Church today, besides teaching Bible also act as an instrument to make people conscious about their social obligations in the society. Apart from the changing trends in socio-religious and political field; changes have also occurred in the livelihood pattern and the way of life in Viswema village.

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