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TRIBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE,
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THE TRIBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE, ASSAM
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**BULLETIN
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TRIBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE, ASSAM**

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**BULLETIN OF THE
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FOURTH ANNUAL ISSUE**

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EDITORIAL NOTE

This is the fourth annual issue of the Bulletin of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati. In spite of our best efforts this issue could not be brought out in time due to some practical unavoidable difficulties.

In the present issue there are altogether eight papers. Besides our faculty members, papers from scholars from Anthropological Survey of India, North Eastern Region, Shillong, Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities and other scholars have also contributed their papers for publication in this issue. However, most of the papers incorporated in this issue were presented in Seminars organised by our Institute.

The first, second and third issues of the Bulletin were very much well received by our esteemed readers. We have also received encouraging suggestions from our readers, well-wishers for the further improvement of the standard of the Bulletin. We have tried our best to translate their suggestions into action. For this issue also we would like to invite suggestions from our esteemed readers so that the future issues can be improved further.

In editing this Bulletin I have received help and co-operation from my faculty members as well as the staff of the Institute. I offer my thanks and gratitude to them for their help and co-operation. I also offer my thanks to the scholars who have contributed their papers for publication in this issue of the Bulletin.

B. N. BORDOLOI

Editor

Bulletin of the Tribal Research Institute
and

Director

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Assam :: Guwahati-781003

Dated 31st December, 1987

Applications of Science and Technology for Environmental Planning in the Tribal Areas of Assam

*B. N. Bordoloi

Background :

Environmental problems, caused by numerous factors detrimental to human welfare, have drawn the attention of the scholars of various disciplines in our country only in recent years. This does not mean that the problems were absent during earlier periods. But in recent years the problems have assumed such dimensions and significance, both in urban and rural areas, that no person with a zeal for welfare of the people can remain a silent spectator. The environmental problems have been becoming more and more acute in recent times because of constant unplanned pressure on the resources available to meet the growing basic needs of the people. Environmental degradation has been taking place everywhere, but in the areas where the tribal people are living it has been taking place at a faster rate. In this paper at first I propose to give an introduction to the Assam tribes, both plains and hills. Next I propose to present an analysis of the factors which have caused degradation in tribal environment and the necessity for environmental planning in tribal areas. And in the last part I propose to deal with the applicability of science and technology for environmental planning in the tribal areas.

An introduction to the Assam tribes :

Assam is blended with hills and plains.

There are 9 Scheduled Tribes in the plains areas and 14 Scheduled Tribes in the hill areas as known below :—

Scheduled Tribes (Plains)

1. Barmans in Cachar
2. Boro, Borokachari
3. Deori
4. Hojai
5. Kachari, Sonowal
6. Lalung
7. Mech
8. Miri
9. Rabha

Scheduled Tribes (Hills)

1. Chakma
2. Dimasa Kachari
3. Garo
4. Hajong
5. Hmar
6. Khasi, Jaintia, Synteng, Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lyngngam.
7. Any Kuki Tribes (37 groups)
8. Lakhar
9. Man (Tai speaking)
10. Any Mizo (Lushai) Tribes
11. Mikir
12. Any Naga Tribes
13. Pawi
14. Syntheng

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If we examine the list of Scheduled Tribes (Hills) closely we find that in serial No. 6, 7 tribes are grouped together. Similarly in serial 7, 37 groups are enlisted together. Serial No. 12 also includes two Naga Tribes. Thus the total number of tribes in Assam would come to 66, 9 in the plains areas and 57 in the hill areas. As per 1971 census the Scheduled Tribes population of Assam was 16,07,035, 13,44,413 in the plains and 2,62,622 in the hills. The percentage of tribal population to the total population of the state was 10.99, 9.19% in the plains and 1.80% in the hills. Since no census could be undertaken in Assam in 1981 due to foreign national agitation, only estimated projected population of the scheduled tribes in 1981 could be furnished here assuming a growth rate of 36.09 percent during the decade 1971-81. At this rate the total scheduled tribes population in 1981 would be 22.02 lakhs, 18.29 lakhs in the plains and 3.73 lakhs in the hill areas. In this connection it would be worthwhile to mention that the tribes which are scheduled in the plains areas of Assam, are not enlisted as Scheduled Tribes in the hill areas and the tribes which are scheduled in the hill areas are not enlisted as scheduled tribes in the plains areas of Assam. The percentage of literacy of the scheduled tribes in Assam as per 1971 census was 26.02 (34.62 males and 17.16 females) as against state percentage of 28.72 (37.19 males and 19.27 females). Numerically while the Bodo Kacharis are largest group among the plains tribes, the Mikirs, otherwise known as the Karbis, are the largest group among the hill tribal communities.

Each tribal community in Assam has its own customs, religion, language and way of life and as such each one has a distinct ethnic identity. Their pace of development also differs from region to region and even the level

of development of the people of the same community inhabiting different regions of the state differs considerably.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the tribal communities of Assam. While in the hill areas shifting cultivation has been the practice, in the plains areas people do wet paddy cultivation. In the Jhums the people raise mixed crops. Along with paddy, vegetables are also grown. In the hill areas people do wet paddy cultivation also in the low lying lands between the two ridges and in the plains portion. Due to heavy pressure of population Jhum cycle has now been reduced to 4/5 years resulting in more destruction of hill forests. Many families in the hills have taken up maize, coffee and ginger cultivation also. Oranges and pineapples are also cultivated by them to a limited extent. In the plains area the tribal people cultivate mustard, pulses, jute and vegetables besides paddy.

Sericulture is an important cottage industry among the tribal communities of Assam. Handloom is a household industry. A tribal woman without the knowledge of spinning and weaving is unthinkable. Cattle are also reared by them. As they are traditionally not habituated in drinking milk, cows and she-buffaloes are generally not milked. Nor this aspect has been commercially exploited fully in spite of very high price of milk and milk products. Pigs and fowls are reared mainly for domestic consumption. Manufacturing of cane and bamboo articles is also one of the important cottage industries of the tribal communities of Assam. Most of the families are poverty stricken and at the beginning of the Sixth Five Year Plan 80% of the families were considered to be below poverty line.

Most of the tribal communities are still having their traditional institutions like the

village councils/panchayats, bachelors' dormitories, institutions of mutual help and co-operation, etc.

Rice is their staple food and rice beer is their favourite drink. In all traditional socio-religious festivals and family worships rice beer is a must.

It would not be out of place to mention here that in Assam there are altogether 524 forest villages and 47.11% of the inhabitants of the forest villages belongs to the tribal communities.

Present environment in tribal areas

The Report on the 'State of Environment in India' prepared by the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, (News item, Times of India, New Delhi Edition, 25th August 1985) has warned that if the environment is not managed properly, India will find it difficult even to feed the existing population and the African experience of famine will recur here also.

In this report it has further been stated that the country has been losing 1.3 million hectares of forests every year resulting in fuel and fodder famine. The report also accuses the government for not doing anything to control the use of dangerous pesticides 70% of which is either banned or severely restricted in the western countries. Mosquito borne diseases like malaria, filariasis, encephalitis, etc. are increasing gradually.

Whatever has been said in the above report is equally true in respect of the rural areas of Assam also.

Now let us take up the factors which are responsible for environment degradation leading to imbalance in the entire eco-system.

1. Deforestation

Deforestation which has been taking place at a very rapid rate in the tribal areas of Assam, both in the plains and the hills, is the principal factor responsible for degradation of environment leading to the imbalance in the entire eco-system. The magnitude of deforestation can be understood from the following statistics. :—

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. The total forest area under reserved forests. (304 Nos. of reserved forests.) | — 17272.98 Sq. km. |
| 2. New areas brought under reserved forests | — 3370.78 „ „ |
| 3. Unclassed State Forests | — 10063.81 „ „ |
| Total | — 30707.57 „ „ |
| 4. Percentage of forest area to total geographical area of the state | 39% |
| 5. Percentage of reserved forests to total geographical area of the state | 22% |
| 6. Percentage of unclassified state forests to total geographical area of the state | 17% |

According to present national norm 25% of the total geographical area should be under forests. Considered from this point of view apparently Assam's position in regard to the forest area is quite good. But in reality the position is quite different. It has been shown above that out of 39% of the state forest area, 17% accounts for unclassified state forests. This includes all unallotted government land including the grazing lands. In fact the axe has fallen severely on this 17%. Depletion of forest of this category is so much so that it is very difficult to say how much of them now remain forests as such. Feeding 44 Nos. of plywood mills, 365 Nos. of saw mills, one match factory,

2 Nos. of match splint factory and two paper mills (one mill is at present closed down) all over Assam and supplying of firewood to meet the demand in urban and rural areas fall heavily on the forest resources. Except the saw mills the others have to depend mainly on the unclassed state forests.

If we take into account the encroachment in the reserved forests, Assam's position in respect of forest area may perhaps slightly be above the present national norm. Under these circumstances Assam's position is not a happy one in the present context. By nature the tribals have a great attachment to the forests which provide them with fuel, edible roots, leaves, fruits, construction materials like thatch, bamboo, timber, cane, etc., and fodder for their cattle. In fact they have a tendency to live near the forests. However the nature and extent of environment degradation due to deforestation are different in the plains and in the hills. As such a separate discussion for both the regions is considered highly essential.

In the plains areas there are state reserved forests, unclassed state forests and small private forests owned by individual tribal families. Encroachment in the reserved forests is very much rampant. Although eviction operations are undertaken from time to time, the problem is a never ending one. The encroachers cut down the planted valuable trees and destroy the reserved forests and clear the encroached area of all vegetations with a view to constructing their dwelling houses and to prepare lands for cultivation. Illegal felling of trees by forest contractors also destroys the reserved forests. Besides these the tribal people also cut the valuable trees within the reserved forests without the knowledge of the forest officials and sell them in the local markets as fuel. Some poor people do it with a view to making some

extra earning so that they can have two square meals a day. But it is also observed that young people from well-to-do tribal families indulge in such activities only to meet the expenses of travelling to the urban areas, to enjoy cinema shows and to entertain themselves in the tea stalls and restaurants in the nearby growth centres, etc., and so on.

So far as the unclassed state forest is concerned trees are cut indiscriminately not only by the local tribal people to meet their domestic needs of fuel and timber for construction of dwelling houses but by contractors and other private individuals also on permit system. These people take the advantage of cutting more trees than they are permitted. In case of reserved forests, the regeneration scheme is there. But so far as the unclassed state forest is concerned regeneration scheme had not received sufficient attention in the past. Mushroom growth of saw mills and plywood manufacturing factories in plains tribal areas rather aggravates the situation as these mills and factories require huge quantities of timber. These mills are under private sector and as such maximum profit making motive with the optimum utilisation of raw materials renders the unclassed state forests almost devoid of matured trees. Moreover to supply firewood to the urban areas, the firewood trees are also harvested indiscriminately. In the plains tribal areas most of the tribal families have bamboo groves in small patches. Some families have small patches of forests also with valuable as well as second class timber producing trees. As they are privately owned the owners have every right to sell them as they like. As the timber price is soaring high, the businessmen lure the owners to sell their trees for which they do not get a fair price. Some families, of course, out of bare

necessities are compelled to sell their trees at throw away prices. But there has not been any attempt to plant new trees to replenish the sold ones.

Coming to the bamboo groves in the plains tribal areas, specially in lower Assam we find a very dismal picture. To feed the paper mills even the one year old bamboos are also not spared. This had resulted in dying the bamboo groves since very limited bamboo shoots appear in groves which are thinned to the greatest possible extent. Not a single bamboo grove is newly planted. There has not been any attempt to stop the cutting of the bamboo groves in such a wretched condition because of the fact that these are privately owned. To urban areas also large number of bamboos are taken away every day.

All these factors lead to destruction of the forests in the plains tribal areas of Assam at a very rapid rate and this leads to ecological imbalance leading to environmental degradation.

As a result of large scale deforestation, the rainfall has become not only less but irregular also. (In this connection the case of Cherrapunji in Meghalaya which had the heaviest rainfall in the world may be referred to. Because of large scale denudation of forests in and around it, Cherrapunji is no longer the heaviest rainfall receiving place in the world). As the rain cycle is affected, the ground water deposit also gets reduced. In Assam people depend on rain for cultivation of their paddy fields. Irrigation still plays a very insignificant role in providing water for cultivation. Less and irregular rainfall is already affecting the people in their paddy cultivation. This is perhaps the greatest danger that the plains tribal people are facing in Assam. Secondly, there is depletion of fodder resource also and this is affecting the cattle population.

It has earlier been mentioned that the tribal people living in the hill areas of Assam except the plains portion of the Diphu Sub-division of the Karbi Anglong District practise shifting cultivation known as Jhum in the north-eastern region of the country.

In the hill areas of Assam there are three types of forests, namely, State Reserved Forests, District Council Reserved Forests and Unclassed State Forests. Encroachment in State Reserved Forests and District Council Reserved forests is nil because of the fact that the density of population in the hill areas is quite less. As per 1971 Census the density of population in the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hills Districts was 37 and 16 per sq. km. respectively as against state density of population 186 per sq. km. So far as the Unclassed State Forests are concerned, constant Jhumming has almost denuded many hills and the barren hills stand there without vegetation whatsoever.

For Jhumming the jungles of the plot selected by a family are completely felled and burnt to ashes after a month or so. Many valuable trees worth of thousands of Rupees are also completely burnt. Without vegetation the capacity of soil to retain moisture is reduced. Rainfall becomes less. The Diphu Sub-division of the Karbi Anglong District falls within the rain-shadow area of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya and as such it receives less rainfall during monsoon than the other parts of the hill areas. But now it receives lesser and lesser rainfall due to the barrenness of the hills resulting in lesser agricultural production.

As the Jhum Cycle was for a longer period formerly, the people had sown the seeds on the ashes of the burnt jungles. Now the Jhum cycle is reduced to 4/5 years in the hill areas of Assam. As a result within this short period

the hills cannot replenish the lost fertility. In order to obtain sufficient production to sustain a family, small hoes are used to till the cleared land. The heavy showers during monsoon takes away the loose top soil through the springs and rivers to the plains below resulting in silting of the river beds. When the river beds become shallow, they cannot carry the same volume of water. This results in floods in the plains, causing havoc to the standing crops, cultivation, life and property of the people living in plains. Flood is always followed by epidemics which affect human beings and animals. When the flood water subsides, foul smelling fills the whole atmosphere. Water of the ring wells submerged by flood becomes unfit for drinking. In this way the entire environment is affected.

When the jungles are cleared for Jhum cultivation, many rare medicinal plants are lost. The habitats of the wild animals are also disturbed.

Among the Karbis there is a tendency to shift the entire village to new Jhum site. This is rather a peculiar problem. Development works of permanent nature and other basic amenities cannot be provided to them under such circumstances. And any scheme for environmental planning also cannot be materialised.

In the Karbi Anglong District the area under Jhum cultivation is 4.15 lakh hectares and the total number of tribal families involved is 45,000. Area under wet paddy cultivation is 0.54 lakh hectares.

In the North Cachar Hills District the area under the Jhum cultivation is 0.83 lakh hectares and the total number of tribal families involved is 13,000. The area under wet paddy cultivation is 0.15 hectares (Report of the National Agricultural Commission, 1976). Bamboos

of smaller and shorter varieties grow abundantly in the jungles of North Cachar Hills. But there is depletion of this resource also as huge quantities of bamboos are sent by rails out side Assam every week. The tribal people cut them indiscriminately in order to earn extra income by selling them to Paper Mill Agents leaving no scope for new bamboo shoots to come out.

Our tribal people have yet to learn the proper use of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides. These are, of course, provided by the agriculture department. The Extension Officers (Agriculture) and the Gram Sevaks may not always be available for demonstrating the use of the dose of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides when the people actually want to utilise them in their fields. The use of these chemicals haphazardly in the paddy fields pollutes the water which is not congenial to fish and affects the fodder grown in the paddy fields as well. Fodder brought from these fields as cattle feed might harm the cattle.

Pollution of drinking water of the ring wells might be caused by the use of separate bucket/pot by each family to draw water from the ring wells. Some buckets or pots used by individual families might be contaminated with the germs of water borne diseases.

Water pollution in the plains tribal areas is also caused by flood, which is a regular feature in Assam during the monsoon season by submerging the ring wells. Flood water also pollutes the water of the rivers. Industrial establishments located in tribal areas also cause water and air pollution. The Salakati Thermal Project and the Bangaigaon Refinery and Petro Chemicals located in the Kokrajhar District, the Chandrapur Thermal Project located in Pragjyotishpur District, the

Namrup Fertilizers Plant located in the Dibrugarh District have polluted the air as well as water of the rivers. Although steps have already been taken to stop water pollution, air pollution continues unabated.

The Bokajan Cement Factory located in the Karbi Anglong District has polluted the entire atmosphere covering a radius of 2 kms. The air pollution is so much so that about half an inch of thick white dust covers the roofs of the houses and the trees and the plants. The atmosphere near the cement factory always remains foggy.

Most of the tribal communities of Assam have hearths inside their houses which remain burning 24 hours. As there are no specific outlets for letting the smokes out, the smokes fill the houses causing air pollution. The tribal people being habituated to this type of living since time immemorial, of course, donot mind this at all.

Over and above these, the question of unhygienic sanitation in the tribal areas has also to be taken into account. The people generally go to the nearby jungles or fields to ease themselves. They practically donot have either sanitary or pit latrines. These tribal communities which have bamboo platform type houses, use to keep the pigs below the platform. As a result foul smells vitiate the whole atmosphere. Cow dung and other refuges are thrown away and scarcely they are dumped in the compost pits.

All these factors mentioned above are responsible for environmental degradation in the tribal areas of Assam.

The already degraded environment will, further degrade and the situations will further deteriorate unless timely actions are taken for planned and scientific management of environ-

ment in the tribal areas of Assam. The planning should have short-term as well as long term perspectives. The short term planning should ensure that the environment does not degrade further and for this purpose effective steps should be chalked out for their immediate implementation. The long term perspective should aim at the improvement of the environment to the greatest extent possible. A piecemeal approach to the environmental problems will not serve any purpose. What we need is actually an integrated approach from all the disciplines which can contribute something for the improvement of the tribal environment. The officials of these disciplines should have the fair knowledge of the socio-cultural factors that govern each tribal society. They should try to have a grasp of their (tribals') problems with sympathy and understanding. Each society has a set of predetermined customary rules. For an outsider some of the customs or customary rules may not sound logical and good. But for the society itself they are quite good. Thus what is considered bad by an outsider may not be considered bad by the tribal society since they judge things according to their own cultural values and ethics. In planning for environmental improvement the planners must take these things into account if they want to have the desired results.

Application of Science and Technology :

In order to stop further degradation in the environment and to improve the environment management in the tribal areas of Assam science and technology must come as a saviour for human survival. From our earlier discussion it is seen that degradation in the environment is mainly caused by the depletion of existing resources in a region. The depletion of resources takes place because of their excessive

exploitation when the people try to meet their basic needs which are increasing by leaps and bounds in the present days changing context. The application of science and technology takes into account the basic human needs and the scientific use/exploitation of available resources without degrading the environment. Thus environmentally sound technologies suitable to the tribal people shall have to be developed with the help of the scientific knowledge.

Afforestation :

In order to stop further deterioration of environment in the tribal areas and to restore ecological balance, afforestation has to be given first priority. Afforestation means the plantation taken up in areas devoid of trees so as to bring the treeless areas under green coverage. This may be done by Production Forestry or by Social Forestry or by both.

So far as the Production Forestry is concerned during the 5th Plan and the 6th Plan the total areas brought under afforestation in the plains areas of Assam was 82,991.37 Hectares and 45,690.00 Hectares respectively. During 1985-86, 7,840 Hectares are proposed to be brought under afforestation. The afforestation scheme includes the plantation of plywood, teakwood and matchwood trees, regeneration of degraded forests, plantation of quick growing trees and regeneration.

To check further deforestation in the plains tribal areas the following steps have been taken by the Forest Department (Production Forestry) :

1. Educating and motivating the people through the medium of publicity to protect and preserve the forest for their own interest.
2. Raising of an additional Forest Pro-

tection Force to check illegal felling and removal of trees and encroachment in the reserved forest areas.

3. To curb illegal inter-state movement of forest produce in co-operation with the West Bengal Government.
4. Coordination of actions of Civil, Police and Forest administrative departments for surprised raids for recovery of illegal possession of forest produce.
5. Introduction of moratorium of annual tree felling in some forest divisions where illegal felling of trees and removal thereof are found.

For afforestation in the tribal areas of Assam social forestry has been implementing a number of schemes.

These schemes are :—

1. Plantation in roadside strips.
2. Roadside tall transplant.
3. Plantation in VGR and PGR strips.
4. Block Plantation.
5. Some Plantation for sericulture.
6. Bamboo Plantation.
7. Other Plantation.
8. Nursery.

In all the plantations the local tribal people are engaged by the Forest Deptt. It enables the people to learn about the scientific way of planting trees as well as their maintenance. In many schools nurseries have been opened. All the required inputs, like the polythene bags, fertilizers, seeds, etc., including technical knowhow are provided by the Department. The seedlings are purchased by the Forest Department from the schools @ 10 paise per seedling. Thus the students are in a position to learn as well as to earn. The students who raise the seedlings with so much care and attention

will never cause destruction to the forests and they might serve as eye openers to others. The Department also distributes seedlings to the people from its local nurseries free of cost for private plantation.

Suitable steps have also been taken to see that the seedlings planted in the road side strips in the tribal areas are not destroyed by stray cattle or human agencies. For this purpose a tribal watch and ward from the nearest village is appointed for every kilometre of road side plantation, at the rate of Rs. 240/- p.m. Any dead plant must be replaced by him by bringing it from the nearest nursery. If he fails to do so one Rupee per dead plant will be deducted from his monthly salary.

Social Forestry is a newcomer to Assam in the sense that since the Sixth Plan only it has been introduced in Assam. Beginning is quite good and in the tribal areas it has been able to create consciousness among the people to preserve forests, to save ecological imbalance and to save environment from further degradation.

The Social Forestry scheme has the following objectives :

1. Supply of firewood to villagers : The trees planted by social forestry wing specially on the road strips are fast growing and as such they can be harvested for firewood within 5 to 6 years of their plantation.

2. Supply leaf fodder and grasses to the cattle population : The leaves of some of the trees planted are suitable as cattle feed. The entire plantation strips have goat proof wire fencing. Grasses grow abundantly in these strips and the local tribal people can have the leaf fodder and grasses for their cattle free of cost.

3. Fruit trees are also planted and the present as well as the future generation will be benefitted from this.

4. Supply of timber : Small timbers required for construction of huts and for using as fencing posts can also be had from these plantations after a gap of a reasonable time.

5. Lastly these plantations also provide raw materials for cottage industries.

The department is also contemplating to have plantations of medicinal plants and also Patidoi which is essential for production of mats.

In order to motivate the people the Social Forestry wing of the Department is introducing puppet shows, Ujapali Dance, dance dramas, long-playing records, radio drama competition, etc. besides the use of the other audio-visual aids like distribution of booklets and pamphlets, cinema shows, pesting of posters, erection of hoardings, etc.

Bio-Gas :

Introduction of bio-gas in the tribal areas of Assam is highly essential. The State Khadi and Village Industries Board which has been entrusted with the task of establishment of Gobar Gas Plants in the rural areas of Assam has installed a few plants in Kumarikata, Tamulpur, Bhurbandha and Sonapur areas which fall within the Tribal Sub-plan area.

Installation of Gobar Gas Plants in the tribal areas of Assam in a planned manner will save the destruction of firewood trees to a considerable extent. It will not only supply fuel for cooking, but generate power for lighting houses etc.

Raw materials, namely, cowdung, are easily available in the rural areas of Assam since there is hardly any family without having some cattle head. In most of the northern states

dried cowdung cakes are used as fuel. But in Assam it has never been used as a fuel so far. The only constraint is the poverty of the people to meet the expenses in installing such plants. A smaller sized plant as per the State Khadi and Village Industries Board's specification costs about Rs. 9,000/- at current price. For the tribals 50% subsidy is there and the Department of Science, Technology and Environment, Government of Assam, offers a grant of Rs. 500/- to the beneficiary. But still then the family has to find out the residual amount of Rs. 4,000/-. The local bank may lend this amount to the family provided the family is economically sound.

The tribal people in Assam have hardly seen the biogas plants. Hence motivation through demonstration is highly essential. For this purpose the installation of community plant involves a quite sizeable expenditures. The only solution is the installation of such plants by the Khadi and Village Industries Board itself. For supply of power for lighting and providing gas for cooking a nominal charge from each family may be obtained. The success of such a scheme will motivate the neighbouring well-to-do tribal people to have their own family units installed.

Such plants may also be established in the educational institutions in tribal areas having hostel facilities. If such plants are installed in the hostels, this will enable the hostellers as well as the students of the Institutions to learn the technical knowhow of the plants and their working. The students themselves may then motivate their parents and guardians to install such plants in their respective homes. Procurement of cowdung will, of course, be a problem as there are no Ashram type residential educational institutions in Assam. In this case also installation of such plants in the

hostels of the educational Institutions shall have to be done by the Assam Khadi and Village Industries Board and the Industries Department or by the Department of Science, Technology and Environment. Except procurement of raw material (cowdung) there will be no operational cost as the hostellers themselves may run such plants. Cowdung may be purchased from the local villagers on a contract basis. The bio-gas scheme should be introduced in the tribal areas in a phased manner.

2. Solar Energy :

Solar energy can very well be utilised for cooking, boiling water and irrigation purpose. It is, of course, a fact that sun rays are available only for a few hours during the day time and that too depends entirely on weather conditions. However, solar energy in the tribal areas can be used for cooking purposes at least. This will save a certain percentage of firewood. This depends on two important aspects, namely, the availability of suitable pressure cookers according to the sizes of the families and secondly their prices. The department of Science, Technology and Environment, Govt. of Assam, has now initiated steps to produce solar cookers suitable for Assam's weather conditions since the solar cookers already produced by different firms in the country are not found suitable for Assam. The prices are proposed to be fixed at the lowest so that they can be within the reach of the common tribal people.

The water pumps run with solar energy are sufficiently costly. For individual farmers it will not be possible to purchase and install such pumps. The Irrigation and Agriculture Departments shall have to install such pumps in different tribal areas of the state for lift irrigation purpose. Such pumps will be

very much useful to the farmers specially during Rabi Season.

3. Preventive measures for air and water pollution :

It has been stated earlier that the tribal people in Assam are in the habit of keeping their hearths burning 24 hours a day. The same hearth is used for cooking food, preparing tea, etc. During winter season the family members sit around the hearth to ward off cold. Even the guests are also entertained near the hearth. Just above a metre of the hearth a Machang (a strongly built platform made of split bamboo) is kept hanging. In this Machang, vegetable and other seeds for next cultivation, newly manufactured cane and bamboo baskets, meat, etc. are kept to save them from insects. The smokes from the burning hearth fill the whole house as there is no specific outlet and thus the air is polluted. Smoke affects the eye sights and the cloths kept inside the house are darkened.

Introduction of smokeless Sullah might save the situation. But whether smokeless Sullahs will be accepted by the tribal people is doubtful as smoke is very much essential and the necessity of smoke is shown in para above. The only way out is to develop a Sullah which omits lesser quantity of smoke and consumes lesser quantity of firewood. The Department of Science, Technology and environment, may play the pioneer's role in this respect. Such type of Sullahs can be introduced in the tribal areas by motivating the advanced section of the people first.

So far as the air pollution caused by the industrial establishments is concerned we may refer to the Assam Air (Preven-

tion and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. The State Board for Prevention and Control of Water pollution, Assam, established under Assam Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 has also been empowered to prevent and control air pollution. So far this Board has not been able to do any concrete works for the prevention and control of air pollution in the tribal areas because of paucity of fund. But the Board has proposed to establish an Air Monitoring Station at Bangaigaon Thermal Project, Salakati, which falls within the Tribal Sub-plan area at an estimated cost of Rs. 1.5 lacs. The proposed station will measure :

1. Gaseous constituents
2. Precipitation products
3. Humidity,
4. Pressure,
5. Temperature,
6. Motion.

The Board has also taken steps to identify the industries which cause air pollution.

Water pollution in the tribal areas caused by the industrial establishments is also another problem. Due to constant efforts of the Board the Industrial establishments which cause water pollution have now established treatment plants for polluted water and only after such treatment water used in the industry is discharged. According to the provisions of the rules framed under Assam Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, whenever a new industry, having potentiality of using water, is proposed to be set up the project report has to be okeyed by the Assam State Board for Prevention and Control of Air and Water Pollution first. The Board Officials examine

the project report to ascertain that there is provision for treatment of discharged water. Project reports lacking in this respect are not approved by the Board and without the Board's approval the proposed industries cannot be set up. Such steps will surely minimize water pollution in tribal areas due to establishment of industries. Fortunately in the tribal areas of Assam we do not have chemical plants. The Bhopal Tragedy caused by the leakage from Union Carbide plant is still fresh in the mind of the people.

In order to avoid drinking water pollution of the ring wells, the Public Health Engineering Department may install hand tube wells in the ring wells to draw water from the wells. Potas, lime and other disinfectants should be used from time to time to purify the water of the ring wells.

Pollution of water in the paddy field due to the use of heavy dose of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides can be controlled by the Agriculture Department by giving proper training to the tribal farmers through frequent demonstrations. Unless the tribal farmers realize fully that these chemicals are actually poisons and their use in heavy doses might bring disaster to fish and fodder in the paddy fields, pollution of water in the paddy fields is likely to continue whenever such chemicals are used. The Agriculture Department should devise means for controlling such type of pollution.

Unhygienic sanitation is another problem in the tribal areas of Assam. The Panchayat and Community Development Department now proposes to construct pit latrine but the people should be motivated first to use such latrines. If the plates are provided free people are likely to accept this scheme.

The Agriculture Department should initiate a special drive for compost pits in the tribal areas. Cowdung and other refuges dumped in the compost pit may be used as fertilizers and such fertilizers are sure to be preferred by the tribal people.

Conclusion :

Degradation in environment in the tribal areas of Assam has been taking place at a rapid rate. In this paper only a few aspects of the problem are discussed. To stop further degradation and also to improve the already degraded environment, Science and Technology must come forward. Due consideration has also to be given to investigate renewable energy from different available sources. Construction of houses with very cheap building materials invented at the Regional Research Laboratory, Jorhat, soil conservation measures, improvement of traditional technologies of the tribal people are some of the other aspects to which science and technology should pay proper attention.

I conclude my paper here by sharing with the participants a few experiences that I gained while paying a visit to Zero, in Arunachal Pradesh, the land of the Apatanis. These people are really expert in environmental management. An Apatani is allowed to cut a matured tree provided he plants one before he fells the tree. Failure to do this means a fine of Rs. 500/- and he can never escape from it. Formerly the punishment was in terms of Mithuns. Bamboo groves are kept so nicely with fencing as if they were flower gardens. Pigs are not reared because they destroy vegetation and make the atmosphere nesty. Of course, each family keeps a pig which might be needed for a Puja. But it is also kept in an enclosure. Cows and Mithuns are kept in the jungles so that they may not destroy crops

and vegetables in the villages. I feel that those we, the so called advanced people, have to learn many things in regard to the environmental management from tribal people living in such fulfilling interior places. Our concerted

efforts should be to make people conscious of the environment where they live, move and have their beings to make the plans and programmes successful.

* This paper was presented by the author in the National Conference on Rural Ecology held in Allahabad on October 12 and 13, 1985 under the aegis of the Department of Environment and Forest, Government of India.

Social Laws of the Boros

*Mohini Mohan Brahma

The Boros are naturally peace loving people. They are prone to abide by the laws prescribed for running their society in smooth, disciplined and orderly way. They appear to be simple, honest and sincere. Truthfulness and trustworthiness are their remarkable virtue of high price. Rev. S. Endle was simply surprised to learn the fact of a Kachari (Boro) who confessed his crime without the least hesitation even knowing that he might be awarded capital punishment. Endle has described in his esteemed book "The Kacharis" in page three that a Kachari of Sekhār Mouza of Mongoldoi was brought before a magistrate on the charge of murder case. All evidences against him were doubtful and quite insufficient to prove him to be guilty. But the accused himself frankly admitted guilt without the slightest fear for punishment. From this fact one can easily infer truthfulness and frankness of the Boros.

The Boros maintain high reverence for their traditional customs, beliefs, rites and rituals. The bindings of their social laws and constitution help them lead disciplined and undefiled life.

This article attempts to throw a light on the social structure and laws of the Boro people with special reference to those who are living in Kokrajhar district.

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Prior to describing the social laws and rules an attempt is made to present a conspectus of the family and the social structures of the Boros to the readers as below :-

Family structure :- A Boro family consists of parents, their children and grand children. Father is the head of the family. He acts as guide of his children. All earning members of the family have to deposit their earnings with their father who bear all responsibilities for maintenance of the family and defraying children's education. Married sons also live in the joint families with their parents. After death of father separation comes among the married sons. Of course, separations of sons who are married may take place even during life time of father under certain reasons.

Sons only are entitled to inherit paternal property. Now-a-days unmarried daughters also are favoured with some portions quite unequal to those of the sons. Father or the eldest son is the person who has right to hand over daughter or younger sister in marriage to bridegroom. After expiry of father, the eldest son becomes the head of the family. He has to shoulder the responsibilities to meet up liabilities if any of their father.

Village structure : A Boro village is subject to the control of Gāmbraī who is termed "Gāon Budā" in Assamese. An

elderly person is chosen by the villagers as Gāmbraī on democratic basis. He is the supreme in all matters. Disputes and complaints of any nature are brought to the notice of Gāmbraī who delivers judgement and punishes the guilty. Though he acts as the chairman yet the final verdict is given in conformity with the decision reached at gathering of the village elders. Punishments vary according to nature of offence in form of fine. Physical thrashing was never inflicted on the offender in the past. Now-a-days this sort of punishment appears to be applied when necessary to make the offender to confess his guilt, but that also not in severe type. Physical torture is strictly prohibited on female offender—whatsoever the offence may be.

The major punishment may include excommunication of the offender in accordance with the nature and amount of crime. Immoral acts and incestuous offence are dealt with severity. In such cases fine is imposed and purification rite is imperative.

Besides Gāmbraī, another person is also selected to assist him by the villagers. He is termed "Hālmāji". His duty is to serve notice and gather villagers in the meeting and to inform villagers about the matter that appears to be important. The meeting is held in the public hall or in the outer yard of Gāmbraī or in the open field under a tree-shade. For his duty Hālmāji is paid a suitable amount of remuneration. But no pay or honorarium is given to Gāmbraī. However, in every case or complaint a meagre honorarium is paid to him from the fees collected from the complainant. During the Zamindari system he was exempted from payment of land revenue up to the extent of ten bighas. In return of this benefit he had

to entertain the Zamindari officials with food and drink when they visited.

Sāmāj : Besides the village organisation there is a bigger one in subdivision wise. This organisation is termed as "Sāmāj". The Samaj also is constituted on a purely democratic basis in the annual gathering involving entire subdivision. The executive body of the Sāmāj consists of one President, one Secretary, one cashier and several members. This body is the highest authority in all matters relating to social administration, social legislation, preparation and implementation of the schemes meant for development of the society. This organisation may be called progenitor of the present Gaon Panchayat system.

A village dispute that can not be settled in the village is sent up to the Sāmāj. The dispute or any matter involving more than one village is taken up by the Sāmāj whose decision is final and binding. The social laws and rules are framed, discussed and passed by the Sāmāj.

With regard to social constitution currently prevailing in Kokrajhar subdivision this article is based on the book published by late Chakramani Brahma, ex-president of Kokrajhar Sāmāj under the title of "Baro Sāmājik Bidhān", amended and enhanced, recently in 1980. As many as 47 sections are incorporated in the constitution. But only the salient points are placed in this article.

In relation to marriage : As a rule, endogamy is absent in Boro society. One can not marry a girl from the cognate family. Although they are exogamous, marriage with a girl from outside Boro community is not encouraged by the society. It is considered to be only a luxury. With regard

to clan the Boro appears to be both endogamous and exogamous. As for instance—a member of a Basumatary clan can marry a girl from a Basumatary family. Like wise a boy from a Basumatary family is free to marry a girl from Narzary or any clan. Marriage between Hindu Boro and Christian Boro is also not strictly prohibited. Only a question of conversion is there. Junior lavirate is very rare. Senior levirate is absent. Sororate appears to be in vogue. Cross cousin marriage is strictly prohibited. Of course, parallel cousin marriage is permissible by the society, While polygamy is rare, polyandry is totally absent.

Section 1 of the social laws :

- (a) Marriage between the Boro families exclusive of the parental lines is entitled to get recognition of the society.
- (b) Marriage within the members of the families of consanguinity is strictly prohibited.
- (c) Marriage among the persons of post fifty generation in case of paternal line and after three generations in case of maternal family is permissible.

Section 2

- (a) Bride must attain at least 18 years age and bridegroom must be of at least 21 years in age.
- (b) The age of husband must not exceed the age of the wife by 20 years in maximum.

Section 3

- (a) Father is the guardian of marriage. In his absence his sons in order of age are entitled to act as guardian in marriage of younger sister.
- (b) In absence of father and sons, paternal uncle and his sons are authorised to act as guardian.

Section 4 : Types of marriage.

The following types of marriage are recognised by the society.

- IA) Songnāy Hābā—This form of marriage is settled by the parents or guardians according to social system.
- IB) Khārsonnāy—This type of marriage is performed when the bride goes to the house of bridegroom and offers herself for marriage at her own accord. But the marriage ceremony is performed only after receiving consent of the Bride's father or guardian.
- IC) Gorjiā—The boy stays at the house of girl's father and works there as a labourer without wages for one or two years or more. On satisfaction of the girl's father with the service of the boy marriage is allowed.
- ID) Dongkhā Habnāy—This is a kind of marriage of a widower with a widow. It is effected on condition that the widower has to cut off all connection with his children by the first wife and forgo all properties there.
- IE) Gongkhon Hābā—Widow marriage. The following types of marriage may be recognized under certain conditions.
- IF) Donkhār nāy—Marriage by elopement
- IG) Man nāy—Marriage after secret illicit connection.
- IH) Borāi nāy—Marriage by enticement.

These three forms of marriage are recognized by the society only after having received parents' or guardians' consent and on payment of fine levied by the Sāmāj. Both the bride and bridegroom are subject to purification ceremony before performance of marriage.

If a man abducts a girl and marriage is operated by force it is termed "Rāikhās Hābā", meaning a demoniac marriage. This type of marriage is obsolete now. In those days the offender was fined up to the extent of one hundred rupees and his associates were fined fifty rupees each. The victimised girl either was to be returned to parents or she could marry the offender if so wished.

Divorce :

It is observed that divorce occurs seldom in Boro community. If any case of divorce is brought to the notice of the Sāmāj, the president of the Sāmāj summons a meeting wherein the case is disposed of after thorough discussion.

The following grounds are considered valid and responsible for divorce.

Section 11

If husband or wife as the case may be suffers from incurable diseases like leprosy, lunacy and mental imbalance etc, or if he or she is proved to be neuter, divorce is admissible.

- (a) If both husband and wife are mutually willing to end their marital connection the Sāmāj admits their divorce.
- (b) If husband inflicts repeatedly intolerable hurt on the concealed part or on the person of wife, she can divorce him.
- (c) If husband is a dacoit, thief, indifferent to wife and of loose character, wife can divorce her husband.
- (d) If wife is disobedient, dishonest, faithless, thief, treacherous and licentious and if she does anything that may lead to injury of husband's life, divorce

from husband's side is considered legal and reasonable.

Divorce is recorded by the Sāmāj. Written documents from both sides are realised. To dispose of it in the traditional custom a piece of betel leaf is torn by the divorcees each holding one side of it. Both husband and wife have to pay divorce fee at twenty five rupees each to the Sāmāj.

Section 12 : Hereditary right.

After death of father sons, adopted sons or grand sons inherit the property on hereditary right.

Section 13 : Adoption of child.

- (a) By consensus of husband and wife a child from husband's clan can be adopted.
- (b) A child from wife's line also can be adopted.
- (c) A child from outsiders also can be adopted if both husband and wife are agreeable.
- (d) In absence of legal heir of husband, the widow can adopt a child from among the kindred of her deceased husband.
- (e) To adopt a child a grand feast with pork is entertained to the village people as witness of adoption. Rice feeding ceremony (Anna prasana) of the adopted child is also to be solemnised with religious rite. Otherwise, the adoption is treated as illegal and invalid. In such case the adopted child is debarred from inheriting the property of the person concerned.

Section 23 : Punishment for immoral and illegal acts.

Agarbād : Incestuous act is termed 'Agarbād' in Boro social law. This sort of illicit connection is highly condemned and treated severely. The traditional belief is still prevalent in Boro community that if such act is committed secretly, mishappening must occur in the family of wrong doer in various forms like sickness of family members, accidents, killing of cows by tiger, falling down of a tree or its branches and other ominous signs and occurrence of ill fate. Besides these, the concerning girl will have to suffer from fatal pain at the time of child-delivery and there will be no parturition unless she confesses her secret act. The fear of this fatal consequence is perhaps one of the causes that make Boro girls remain cautious and conscious to preserve their chastity.

For commission of the immoral acts of the above nature fine is imposed on the wrong doers and purification rite is performed,

Besides the above, the offences committed by beef eating, cow slaughter and sexual intercourse with beasts are also involved in Agarbād. Blood injury to cow is also implicated in this section.

Section 24

Dāokhi Bād : This is an illegal sexual act

committed between the persons of distant relationship.

Section 25

Phongslad Bād : It implies the illicit connection with a person outside relationship.

Section 26

Khawāli Bād : If husband is beaten by wife he is treated as untouchable. If a person brings from cremation ground any article that was taken along with dead body he is also involved in Khawāli Bād.

Section 40

A person who inflicts physical torture on parents, grand parents, uncles, aunts, elder brothers, elder sister and any other relatives of higher ages is punishable with social fine along with an addition of defamation fine—to the aggrieved party. The amount of fine is fixed by Gāmbrāi.

There is still a lot of social laws prescribed for smooth running of society which are not mentioned here for want of place. Violation of any section of the social laws may, according to degree and nature of offence, entail expulsion from the society which is treated as the major punishment of the highest degree by the Boros.

*Paper presented by the author in the Seminar on Socio-Cultural Development of the Plains Tribes of Assam, organised by T.R.I. Assam, at Bagadhar Brahma Kishan College, Jalah from April 27 to April 29, 1985.

Land System in Assam and Tribal Belts and Blocks

J. N. Das, I.A.S.(Retd.)

Right recognized by the State.

All lands of belong to the State. No person can have any right over land unless the State recognises it, of course, we do assert that "this homestead land where I have built my house belongs to me" or "that agricultural land which my forefathers cultivated in the past and I am cultivating now cannot but belong to me." These two assertions are not incorrect. But we must remember that in respect of them we hold either a periodic or an annual patta or some document of grant given by the State and further that we have to pay revenue for them. The very fact that we hold some patta or grant-deed indicates that there is some superior owner that permits us to use and occupy lands for specified purposes. That permission is incorporated in the patta or the grant. The permission amounts to recognition of some right over the land enjoyed by us. Any person who occupies any land without such permission (i.e. a "patta" or "grant-deed") is an unauthorised trespasser liable to be ejected by the State.

According to section 6 of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation 1886, which is the basic land-law of Assam, the State recognises only three categories of fundamental land-rights and certain other derivative right flowing from them. These three fundamental

categories are,—

- (a) the rights of proprietors,
- (b) the rights of landholders, and
- (c) the rights of settlementholders other than landholders.

From these fundamental rights, certain other rights are derived, the most important among them being the rights of tenants. The rights acquired by transfer or succession are also regarded as derivative rights.

What are then the chief characteristics of the three fundamental categories of land-rights mentioned above ?

Features of different classes of rights : Proprietor

Two classes of persons who hold either (i) revenue-free lands (like lakhiraj estates or fee-simple estates), or (ii) permanently settled lands (such as Zamin-deri estates of Goalpara and Karimganj) are, in law, called proprietors. Their rights are mentioned in the Sanadsgiven to them by the State Government or in the copperplates granted by the old Assam Kings but recognized later on by the State Government.

At this point it may be pointed out that land rights form a bundle containing several separable items of rights of rights. The most important of these are,—

- (i) the right to use and occupy, (ii) the right

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to transfer by way of sale, mortgage, gift, lease etc.,

(iii) the right to inherit, (iv) the right of permanency and (v) the right over mines and minerals, forests and fisheries. The full bundle constitutes the complete ownership of land, but the bundle may be bigger or smaller according to the quantum of rights contained in it. A certain bundle may contain all the rights mentioned above, but another bundle may contain only, say, the right to use and occupy. Yet another may contain the right to use and occupy, the right to transfer and the right to inherit, but not the right over mines and minerals. According to the size of the bundle, the value of ownership is higher or lower.

Now, reverting to the question of rights which a proprietor enjoys, it may be roundly stated that the proprietor enjoys all the rights mentioned above, including the right over mines and minerals, forests and fisheries. His bundle is, therefore, the biggest, and his rights considered as the highest.

Landholder

The landholder enjoys permanent, heritable and transferable right of use and occupation in his land. But he has no right over mines and minerals embedded in the soil and is subject to certain restrictions regarding transfer. His rights are recognised by the State by granting a patta the duration of which is not less than ten years, but now-a-days usually thirty years. This patta is known as the periodic lease. Though the period expires at the end of thirty years, it is normally renewed automatically for another thirty years. In this sense, his rights are permanent, but certainly of lesser value than those of the proprietor.

Settlementholder other than landholder

The settlementholder other than landholder's rights are of still lesser value. He has only the right of use and occupation and no other right. He is given a lease for only one year at a time, though it is normally renewed automatically at the end of the year. But the Government may not renew the lease after issuing a three months' notice. He has no right of transfer. He cannot sub-let it to others. His right of inheritance is also limited to the year of the lease. It is thus seen that, of the three categories of land-rights, his rights are the lowest.

Tenancy-rights

Of the derivative rights flowing from the three fundamental categories of rights, those of the tenants are the most important. Since the settlementholder-other-than-landholder has no right of sub-letting there can be no tenant under him. But the other two classes, namely, the proprietor and the landholder have the right of sub-letting and they do have tenants under them in varying degrees. Revenue-free-estate-holders like—*Lakhirajdars* form almost wholly a non-cultivating class, and so are the Zaminders of the permanently settled estates. They get their lands cultivated by tenants. Similarly, certain classes of landholders, chiefly the holders of *nisf khiraj* estates, sub-let their lands to tenants.

Tenants are allowed to cultivate the lands on condition of (a) payment of rent to the owner and (b) vacation of possession at the will of owner. In olden times the owners used to extract exorbitant rate of rent and eject the tenants on flimsy grounds. Tenancy legislations were therefore passed to regulate the rate of rent and the procedure of ejection. The Goalpara Tenancy Act was passed in 1929 to

give protection to the tenants of the proprietors of permanently settled estates of Goalpara, and a similar tenancy act, called the Sylhet Tenancy Act 1936, was passed to give the same sort of protection to tenant of the permanently settled areas of Karimganj. For giving protection to the tenants of the *lakhirajdars* and the landholders of the Brahmaputra Valley and Cachar, the Assam Temporarily Settled Districts Tenancy Act 1935 was passed, which was later on replaced by the Assam Temporarily Settled Areas Tenancy Act, of 1971. All these tenancy acts have given security of tenure to the tenants and safeguarded them against rack-renting. The tenants cannot now be ejected easily, nor can their rents be enhanced arbitrarily, as the rates have been fixed by the Acts.

Changes after Independence

The above is a simplified picture of the land system of Assam as it existed before Independence. After independence, however, certain basic changes have taken place due to various measures of land-reforms. All the permanently settled estates of Goalpara and Karimganj (embracing about 16,80,743 acres) have been acquired by Govt. under the provisions of the Assam State Acquisition of Zaminderis Act, 1951. As a result, the proprietors of this class have disappeared. In the permanently settled estates of Goalpara and Karimganj, the tenants have become landholders.

Then, again, under the provisions of the Assam State Acquisition of Lands belonging to Religious and Charitable Institutions of Public Nature Act, 1959, large areas (about 1,10,986 acres) of *lakhiraj*, *nisfkhiraj* and other intermediary tenures have been acquired by Government. Here also the tenants of the

temple and the *Satras* have become land-holders.

Similarly, considerable areas (about 5,81,540 acres) of lands have been acquired from big landholders and proprietors of fee-simple-estates under the provisions of the Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Landholdings Act, 1956. Here also the tenants have been given the status of landholders.

According to the Administration Report of 1959-60, the following areas of Assam were held under different tenures at that time :

| Name of the tenurs | Area in acres |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Proprietary tenurs :— | |
| (a) Lakhiraj estates | 1,12,558 |
| (b) Fee-Simple estates for tea cultivation | 5,62,139 |
| (c) Permanently settled estates | 16,80,743 |
| Total area under proprietary tenures | 23,55,440 acres |
| 2. Lhndholder's tenures :— | |
| (a) Periodic estates for ordinary cultivation | 27,41,160 |
| (b) Periodic estates for tea cultivation | 3,63,900 |
| (c) Nisfkhiraj estates | 1,85,675 |
| (d) Grants for tea cultivation | 3,20,729 |
| (e) Special settlements | 1,03,660 |
| (f) Miscellaneous estates | 27,559 |
| (g) Town Lands | 22,073 |
| Total area, under Landholder's tenures | 37,64,756 |

3. Settlementholder other than landholder's tenures :—

| | |
|---|-----------|
| (a) Annual land for ordinary cultivation | 19,65,753 |
| (b) Annual land for tea cultivation. | 795 |
| Total for annual land | 19,66,548 |
| Grand total for all tenures | 80,86,744 |

As a result of the land-reform measures mentioned above, the proprietary tenures are fast disappearing, and the landholders' tenures increasing.

As against the total areas held directly under the state, the total area held by tenants under proprietors and landholders do not exceed 4 lakh acres. The percentage of tenancy area to total settled area, therefore, does not go beyond 5%. The world Agricultural Census of 1970-71 also found that the total rented area in Assam formed 5.47% of the total operated area. The land system of Assam can, therefore, be called a real *ryotwari* system (i.e. a system where the tiller is also the owner).

Government waste-land

As has already been indicated, all lands except those held by proprietors, landholders and settlementholders-other-than-landholders are purely Government lands. In common parlance, such lands are known as Sarkari or waste-lands. Out of these waste lands, Government reserve certain areas for village grazing ground, professional grazing ground, forest reserves, roads, embankments, and for various public purposes. The remaining waste-lands are at the disposal of the Government for giving settlement for cultivation or homestead or non-agricultural purposes. During the early period of the British rule, Government settled with British

tea-companies huge tracts of land for cultivation of tea in the Upper Assam districts, particularly Sibsagar (old) and Lakhimpur (old). But in Lower Assam, vast areas of *Char* lands and riverside lands along the Brahmaputra river lay waste and virgin. Similarly the sub-montane zones below foothills of the Himalayas was generally unoccupied except in small stretches here and there.

Immigration problem

As the beginning of the twentieth century, the vacant *char* areas of Assam attracted vast numbers of land-hungry immigrants from Mymensing district (now in Bangladesh). In 1911, the number of such immigrants was 1,20,000, in 1921, 3,01,000, and in 1931, 4,87,000. These people did not bother to take permission or obtain pattas from Government. Gradually, as cultivable *char* areas became exhausted, they spread into riverian area of both banks of the Brahmaputra. Here clashes occurred between the immigrants and the indigenous population, particularly the tribals. The tribals, sensitive by nature, to the presence of unfamiliar population, more so when they are of aggressive type, shifted to the distant sub-montane areas. But the more established villages saw daily occurrence of violent clashes and conflicts. The district officers, purely for keeping law and order, declared certain villages as "closed" to the immigrants certain as "Open" to them, and yet others as "mixed" villages. In the "closed" village they could not acquire land by settlement or by purchase, in the "open" village, they could do so, and in the 'mixed' villages, there was a line beyond which they could not go. This gave rise to the term 'Line' System".

The 'Line System' which was evolved to meet the exigencies of circumstances could not solve a complicated problem which gradually

gathered political overtones. In 1936 a Line-System Committee suggested that the unit of prohibition should be made larger than the scattered "closed" or 'mixed' villages. Following this recommendation, the Congress Coalition ministry, in 1936, resolved to constitute whole mouzas or compact parts of mouzas inhabited predominantly by tribal and backward classes into prohibited areas. It was intended that in these areas immigrant cultivators should not be allowed to acquire land either by new settlement of Sarkari Khas land or by transfer of annual pattas and that any immigrant so taking up land or squatting should be evicted.

This resolution, however, remained a pious intention till 1945. In between, new ministries and even a brief spell of Governor's rule intervened, due to political circumstances of national dimension. During this period, a fierce controversy arose over the immigration problem, and in the meantime, the immigrants spread themselves into the Upper Assam districts of Lakhimpur (old) and Darrang (old) too. In 1945, the new Congress ministry finally adopted a practical measure for the "protection of tribal classes in areas predominantly occupied by them against aggressive elements which are apt to endanger the normal economics and social basis of village life." **The practical measure consisted in making out on maps all villages in which the percentage of persons of tribal classes exceeded 50, and forming tribal belts or blocks comprising these villages in the sub-montane areas. Within these belts or blocks reservation of land should be made for safe-guarding the tribals and others at the time living there, and no further settlement was to be made with others. "Others at the time living there" had to be given the

same protection as the tribals, because in practice it was found extremely difficult to omit the non-tribal villages situated side by side with the tribal ones, if compact areas were to be demarcated and formed into tribal belts. A special official who belonged to a tribal community prepared, after local enquiries, a map showing the villages where the tribal population exceeded 50%.

Legislation for creation of tribal belt/blocks

On the basis of the 1945—July resolution the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation 1886 was amended in 1947 (vide Act XV of 1947) and a new chapter (chapter X) under the caption "Protection of Backward Classes" was added to it. The new legislation, firstly authorized the State Government to specify the backward classes who needed protection, and, secondly to form tribal belts or blocks in compact areas predominantly inhabited by these backward classes. Thirdly, in these belts and blocks, (a) settlement of waste lands and (b) transfer of already settled lands were controlled by special provisions.

Under the authority given to this new law, the State Government notified the following classes of persons as 'backward classes' for the purpose of chapter X, namely, —(i) plains tribals, (ii) hills tribals, (iii) tea-garden tribals, (iv) Santheals and (v) Scheduled castes. The State Government also constituted 38 tribal belt/blocks throughout the State.

Gist of the contents of the legislation regarding settlement of waste land

In giving settlement of waste lands in a belt or a block the State Government, according to the Amendment (Act XV) of 1947, is required to consider the bonafide need of :—

*Govt. Resolution No. 5216R Dt. 10.11.39 on the Line System

(a) Those who were permanent residents of the belt/block, whether tribal or non-tribal, on the date of constitution of the belt/block.

(b) those tribals or non-tribals who were, on the date of formation of the belt/block holding patta-lands therein and were likely to become permanent residents within a reasonable time.

(c) those who belong to the classes notified as needing protection, but live elsewhere in the district, and

(d) those who belong to other classes of persons living in the neighbourhood but whose religion, mode of life, agricultural customs and habits are akin to those of the notified classes, provided the available land is large enough, (old Sec.163).

It will be seen from the above that even a person not belonging to any of the notified classes could get settlement of waste-land provided he was a permanent resident or a settlementholder at the time of creation of the belt or block. A person belonging to a notified class, however, could get such settlement even if he lived outside the belt/block, but within the district.

These important provisions about settlement of wasteland have since been drastically amended by the President's Act No. 2 of 1981. According to this new amendment, a person not belonging to a notified class, even if he was a permanent resident of the belt/block from before the date of its creation cannot ordinarily get settlement of waste-land in the belt/block, but he can do so provided two conditions are fulfilled, namely, (i) that the available waste land is large enough and (ii) that the previous approval of the State Government has been obtained.

Similarly, even a person belonging to a notified class but living outside the belt/block is not eligible to get any settlement of waste land unless the available waste land is large enough and previous approval of the Government is obtained.

But a person belonging to a notified class who is a permanent resident of a tribal belt/block since its creation, or who though temporary resident, yet holds patta lands and undertakes to become permanent resident is eligible to get settlement of waste land in a normal way. (Amended Section 163)

Regarding transfer of land

So far as transfer of land in a tribal belt/block is concerned, before the Amendment Act of 1982 came into force, any periodic land could be transferred,—(i) to a person of a notified class, wherever residing, or (ii) to a person (whether of a notified class or not) who was permanently residing in the belt/block at the time of its creation or who, though temporarily residing, was a settlementholder therein and undertook to become permanent resident. (Old Section 164 combined with Rule 9 framed under Chapter X).

After the Amendment Act of 1982 came into force, the position as at (ii) above has undergone some change. Transfer of land in a tribal belt/block to a person who does not belong to a notified class is permissible only if such a person is a permanent resident therein and also if prior permission of the Deputy Commissioner has been obtained. (new Section 164).

If any transfer is effected in contravention of the provisions mentioned above, the District Registrar or the Sub-Registrar may refuse to register the document of transfer, (sec. 162).

The rights of a landholder who may have been holding a periodic patta from before the creation of a belt/block stand automatically modified on the above lines (Sec. 164).

Regarding unauthorized occupation

In a tribal belt/block encroachers of Sarkari Khas land may be forthwith ejected, Unauthorized occupants of annually settled land are also liable to ejection forthwith. Annual leases automatically terminate at the end of the year. Encroachers on periodic land in contravention of the provisions of Chapter X of the Assam Land & Revenue Regulation may also be ejected, but only after one month's notice has been served. (Sec.165).

The provisions of Chapter X of the Assam Land & Revenue Regulation do not apply to (a) tea-land and (b) lakhiraj nisfkhiraj and special estates located within a belt/block. (Sec. 162).

The provisions of Chapter X of the Assam Land & Revenue Regulation were enacted well before the Indian Constitution came into force. The spirit of these provisions is quite in conformity with the Directive Principle enshrined in Article 46 of the Constitution.

Study of impact of the legislation

In 1981, the Law Research Institute made an on-the-spot study of the impact of the provisions of Chapter X of the Assam Land & Revenue Regulation. It visited 13 typical villages in Tamulpur Tribal Belt and 8 in Kokrajhar Tribal belt. It found that these provisions had palpable, beneficial effects on the tribals. It slowed down the pace of penetration by non-tribal elements into the tribal

belt/block. In Tamulpur Tribal belt, out of 342 transfer-plots studied, 43.8% were found to be transferred by tribals to tribals, 23.1% by tribals to non-tribals, 4.1% by non-tribals to tribals, and 28.7% by non-tribals to non-tribals. In Kokrajhar Tribal belt, out of 237 transferred plots studied, 65% were found to be transferred by tribals to tribals, 7.6% by tribals to non-tribals, 4.2% by non-tribals to tribals and 23.2% by non-tribals to non-tribals. The passing of land from tribals to non-tribals was thus less than one-fourth of the total transfer transactions studied in Tamulpur, and one-fourteenth in Kokrajhar.

As regards settlement of Sarkari Khas land, out of a total settled area of 1710 hectares in Tamulpur belt, 1255 hectares were settled with notified classes. and 455 hectares with others. In Kokrajhar Belt, out of a total settled area of 1232 hectares, 1061 hectares were settled with notified classes and 171 hectares with others.

Problems in these two tribal belts have been acute with regard to the encroachments of Sarkari lands. In village Angarkata of Tamulpur belt, out of 1851 hectares of the total village area, 1187 hectares are under encroachment. A large number of encroachers are understood to have come from outside the belt.

The situation in tribal belt/blocks is not so bleak as is sometimes made out to be by uninformed persons. The tribal people now seem to be aware of the special rights and prohibitions applicable to them. It is the encroachment in Govt. waste lands and reserves that is causing some concern at the moment. This should not be an intractable problem, if tackled with will and determination.

*Paper presented by the author in the seminar on Socio-cultural Development of the Plains Tribes of Assam organised by T. R. I. Assam, at Bagadhar Brahma Kishan College, Jalah, from April 27 to April 29, 1985.

Cultural Factors and Tribal Development Planning

*H. K. Rabha

Introduction :

The plight of the tribals in our country rather depicts a dismal picture. The living conditions and their sufferings are more or less all the same as before. Our welfare planning measures were launched just after the attainment of our national freedom, some 35 years ago. But now, at the end of the 6th 5 Year Plan, it is sad to note that the tribals are at the same level, where they were centuries before. The tribals spend their lives in extreme poverty and unbearable deprivation. Poverty, not only in regard to nutritional standards but also in regard to ignorance, illiteracy, un-hygienic living conditions, sufferings from easily curable diseases, early death and the likes. They are the worst sufferer of the diseases of indebtedness, land alienation and bondage labour. Most of them are in octopus grip of the exploiters. The number of population of these down-trodden people is not negligible but fairly large. Therefore, the talk of making our nation strong and vigorous would prove meaningless unless these people get strong and are integrated in the national mainstream.

The National Scene :

According to estimates available, there are some 7 crores of tribal people in India. Some of the tribals are already scheduled by the President of India in the Scheduled tribes list

and others are yet to be scheduled. No tribes are scheduled by the President of India for Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondichery. There are about 300 tribal communities in India living either in the hills or in some 50 thousand tribal villages all over India. These tribal communities are at various stages of their culture and living. Among them 52 tribal communities are recently recognised as the most primitive communities who are at the level of their precarious existence. Unless proper measures to save these communities are taken by the Government, these communities are bound to extinct within a short span of time. The pace of development among other tribal communities are also very miserable and as such most of them are at the verge of ruin. In these communities about 95 p. c. among the womenfolk are completely illiterate, more than half of the tribals eke out of their living from forest products directly or indirectly. About 90 p. c. of the tribals still entirely depend upon agriculture, as their mainstay. In their social, political, religious and economic life one would find equally deteriorating conditions prevailing among them. For example Bondage Labour problem is a curse to Indian Society. In spite of the prevailing law and regulation against bondage labour as good as million tribals are in bondage in our country. Naturally the question crops up in our mind : How then is our motherland free ?

Images of the tribal cultures :

According to Shri P. C. Joshi of Delhi University, the defect in Government planning is that the tribals are never asked, what they really want. Official schemes are imposed upon them unilaterally without knowing their social background, liking and disliking, abilities and disabilities and geo-social factors.

(a) We seldom use to blame tribals for animal sacrifice in their festivals and criticise it to be an un-civilised act. But as a typical tribal meal would consist of a meagre item and develop a poor dietary habit, therefore eating of meat in the annual festivals or pujas thus cater to their need for biological survival. Unless and until food habits of these people are drastically changed it will be improper to criticise them.

(b) Some times we also blame the tribals for polyandry. But till the tribes are agriculturists and semi-pastoral with scattered land distributions all over, or practise Jhum Cultivation, Polyandry or joint family becomes functionally important.

(c) In most of our forest areas the number of animals and birds have declined because the tribals are killing them for food. Disturbing the ecological balance in this manner is bound to have harmful consequences. But it is blatantly unfair to blame the tribals for this depressing state of affairs as officials seldom tend to do. The tribals are resorting to killing animals and birds entirely because they cannot survive by traditional means as they did in the past.

According to Shri Joshi, it is due to their inability to understand the inner significance of their culture. He pointed out, that it is due to the ethnocentric bias on the part of the 'superiors' who suffer from the syndrome of cultural superiority. (P. C. Joshi : 1981. VB)

Significance of Cultural Factors in Development Process :

Let us start with the observation of Sh. Bage : "As an administrator and as a man among the masses, I know why a government machinery of planning fails. It fails mostly due to lack of proper understanding of the people and their problem. And a greater danger is the fact that they think that they know the people." Shri L. M. Prasad further clarifies the point "there is an integral relationship between culture and administration. Unfortunately, we try to administer tribals without understanding their culture" (L. M. Prasad : VB)

It can be observed that due to non-understanding of the cultural background of the tribals on the part of the administrators and planners, a many well meaning developmental schemes are already proved to be failure. A few examples may be cited in this regard.

1. The Governments in some states took up rehabilitation schemes for the wandering tribes. They erected spacious and ventilated houses and put up colonies for them. The Govt. also provided them cultivable land, financial help both kind and coin etc., which are generally provided for the distressed and displaced peasants. But the tribals without any knowledge of cultivation miserably fail in the process and ultimately leave these colonies only to re-enter into their forest life.

2. Industrial nomadism is another example in point. With a view to make the isolated tribal areas forward and make the tribals more exposed to civilized society the Government venture to establish big industries in tribal areas. At the beginning the tribals are welcome and engaged in clearing up the jungles and constructing of roads, but after the commissioning of the industry and with the growing

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industrial township the tribals become the most unwanted persons in the area as because they are unable to march forward with others. The area will undoubtedly develop but the tribals will not.

Concept of Development :

There are two groups of thinkers regarding the concept of development. The first group lays emphasis on the material factors of development and considers the non-material factors to be of least important. The 2nd group however stresses more upon the socio-cultural factors in the process of development and considers development as equal to growth plus change.

A set of growth variables, acting over a period of time may yield the desired goal, regardless to the qualitative improvement of the society, which is measurable through quantified indicators, such as the rate of growth national income, percapita income, etc. In such a growth process increase in wealth may not necessarily correspond to increase in welfare of the society.

The growth process to be meaningful and appropriate, the planners should take upto account the socio-cultural factors of a group or an area concerned, which is an integral part of the dynamics of growth and that social change is not simply a non-functional or dis-functional side effect of development planning.

According to Dr. L. P. Vidyarthi, noted anthropologist, "The concept of development had to be defined and operated in terms of the cultural background of the community concerned. While striving for their development of group or an area, due emphasis has to be given to their traditional values and historical experiences. Every cultural group, in view of its respective ecological setting and many cultural experiences has developed a style of life, a type

of Nature-Man-Spirit complex, which persists through the ages".

Tribal Development Planning and Anthropology :

The subject Anthropology has a vital role to play in the process of developmental planning. The view of the Anthropologists and other social scientists in this regard can never be over emphasised. According to them, "approach to tribal development requires a clear" a prior "understanding of the social organisations and cultural values through sustained field investigation, collection of adequate and complete data, before planning and formulating any policy of development for any group of people" (S. N. Rath:1982:T.D.I.) There are some social thinkers who uphold the view that those bureaucrats should be posted at tribal areas who knows their culture. "In fact anthropology should be introduced as a compulsory subject at the time of training of personnels. Those personnel who learn tribal languages should be awarded with extra increments." This view exactly corresponds to what Jawaharlal Nehru, said in connection with tribal development. However it is Dr. L. P. Vidyarthi who summarises the point with the following lines : "During the past five year plan periods numerous schemes have been implemented and crores of rupees spent in the name of development of backward classes, but satisfactory progress could not be made because anthropological principles were ignored. Although the Harijans and the tribals are still suffering from poverty, exploitation and illiteracy, in detail their problems are different and call for different solutions. Again their economic and cultural levels also differ and there should be different schemes for different levels right from the start. The Central and State Government have not been able to comprehend

this difference. The result of such errors is that only marginal improvements have been brought about in the condition of Harijans and Adivasis" [L. P. Vidyarthi : 1982:VB]

Conclusion :

On the basis of foregoing analysis it will not be difficult to summarise the points here. That the tribals are still in the lowest ladder of social hierarchy, at least at the national level, is a fact and is admitted on all hands. It is not that the Government has totally neglected the tribal cause but is due to the very lacunae in the planning itself. It is the cultural factors of the tribals which are mainly, if not solely, responsible for the failure of developmental schemes which were virtually absent in the previous plans. There are instances, where the customary tradition of the tribals have to directly conflict with the institutional law or with the declared policy of the Government. Without a drastic change in their age-old traditions, outlooks and habits, any institutional scheme imposed upon them from above, without taking into account of the same, will not yield the desired result. Here the need of an anthropological treatment arises. Without proper survey, and before hand knowledge no plan will be meaningful and appropriate for a certain group of people or an area. Due to the lack of such precaution, it is that only a particular class of people among the tribal communities is receiving fully benefits of safeguards and reservations. Consequently due attention is being denied to those backward tribals which are still weak and neglected.

During the 6th plan period 57 lakh families were covered in the TSP area, the population of which accounts for about 65

percent of the country's total tribal population in 7 states and two Union territories. The Sixth Plan target was that 50 percent of those living below the poverty line in the sub-plan (TSP) areas should come above the poverty line. Thus during the last plan period 80 percent of these tribals were below the poverty line. In view of the most deteriorated conditions of the tribals in spite of ceaseless efforts on the part of the government and at the cost of huge expenditure on their development, naturally calls for attention of everybody. The Government, departments, planning bodies, social scientists have been showing increasing concern over the problems. Therefore it is high time to review the entire planning process relating to the tribal development and eliminate the limiting causes, with due consultation and in collaboration of the social scientists specially anthropologists to make it a success. Generally concern for the uplift and development of the tribals has been shown mainly by the government agencies and social workers. Therefore where Government efforts failed, the role of voluntary organisations should be started with full vigour.

In the last but not the least, we also do believe that the tribals are gifted with as much intelligence as we are. There is no evidence that God has discriminated against them in distributing of grey matters. Their only handicap is poverty. Once they get fuller opportunities of education their talent will assert itself in all directions and dimensions. (R. B. God bole : 1981 : VB) Therefore tribal development is not an impossible task, but is within the reach of governmental effort which can be achieved through sympathetic and meaningful planning.

*Paper presented by the author in the Seminar on Socio-cultural Development of the Plains Tribes of Assam organised by the T. R. I., Assam at Bagadhar Brahma Kishan College from April 27 to April 29, 1985.

Problems of Entrepreneurship Development Among Tribal Youth

Atul Goswami*

The crucial role that entrepreneurs play in the process of economic development of a country/region particularly in the free-market and mixed economies is acknowledged by everybody. The economic prosperity of the western countries and of Japan is attributable, among others, chiefly to a small class of forward looking persons known as entrepreneurs ready to seize upon every opportunity to their advantage. Even in our own country the economic prosperity of Punjab and Haryana and other economically advanced regions is owing largely to the enterprise of the local people. On the other hand, lack of local entrepreneurship may severely limit a region's economic development, despite its rich resource endowments. All the underdeveloped countries in general and the backward areas in particular (e.g. the north-eastern region of our country) are a pointer to this fact. Natural resources of a country/region determine its possibilities of economic development. How far these possibilities are realised in practice is dependent on the quality of its human resources, a major component of which is entrepreneurial ability. In the underdeveloped countries/regions there exists a big gap between actual development and potential development.

'The entrepreneur is the man who sees the opportunity for introducing a new technique

or a new commodity, an improved organisation, or for the development of newly discovered resources. He raises the money to launch a new enterprise, chooses top managers, and sets the organization going. He need not be a 'capitalist'—he may not provide any funds of his own. He may not be a day-to-day manager. Nor is he usually an inventor or explorer. Inventions or discoveries by themselves have little economic effects..... For inventions and resource discoveries to be significant, someone with the special talent for seeing their economic potential and bringing them into use must come along. That man is the entrepreneurs.¹

That the development (including economic development) of a country/region is impossible without the simultaneous, if not prior, development of local entrepreneurship becomes obvious when we recall that economic development should not be confused with a mere increase in per capita income. The increase in per capita income, to be reflective of the country's/region's economic development must be a result of its increased factor productivity. True development requires a qualitative change (improvement) in the economy.² A sustained increase in per capita income even in the real terms resulting from exogenous forces or without local people's participation in it may in fact the very negation of economic development.³

To the believers of the classical theory, development of entrepreneurship is an impossibility, since according to them the entrepreneurship is an inborn quality and cannot be developed by human efforts. Recent researches on the subject, however, have shown that although the process of entrepreneurial development is a complex one, like any other human ability, it can also be developed through proper counselling, training and support. The success of entrepreneur development programmes in India (Gujrat in particular) and abroad has been an eye opener. It has led to the launching of schemes for developing entrepreneurship in the less developed regions.⁴

Although the north-eastern region as a whole is grossly deficient in entrepreneurial ability, the regions inhabited by the tribal people suffer from an even greater shortage of local entrepreneurs, which partly explains why they represent a case of poverty. According to 1971 census, the scheduled tribe population of Assam stood at 16.07 lakh (constituting 10.98 per cent of the State's population) with heavy concentration in the erstwhile districts of N. C. Hills, Karbi Anglong, Lakhimpur, Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang. With 13.44 lakh persons plains tribal population constituted 83.68 per cent of the total scheduled tribe population and 9.19 per cent of the State's population. Although plains tribal people are found in all districts, about 62 per cent of them had their concentration in the erstwhile districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Dibrugarh and the rest 38 percent were distributed in the southern bank districts.⁵ The distinguishing economic features of plains tribes dominated regions are prevalence of subsistence agriculture (marked by the application of outmoded technology and consequent low productivity), absence of capital formation and existence of heavy indebtedness leading

to land transfer and alienation, disinclination industrial pursuits, trade, business, and commerce and the prevalence of heavy expenditure on socio-religious rituals.⁶ The problems of these valley-dwelling tribes are not basically different from those of the Indian peasantry in general. Because of their long exposure to the national economy, polity and society, they now retain very little of their indigenous economic and political practices and institutions. Save their physical features and some social practices, they are indistinguishable in their modes of production and pattern of consumption from the non-tribal peasant class. Money has made inroads into these societies. Private ownership of the resources has taken firm roots resulting in social stratification. Because of non-insulation from the stronger national forces, the areas inhabited by the plains tribes have become, by a large, more impoverished economically. Barring the case of the elite members of which are extremely limited in number, the great majority of the plains tribal population have been reduced to the position of poor peasants. As a class they constitute the matrix of Indian poverty.⁷ As geographical areas, they are grossly deficient in infrastructural facilities.

Plains tribal areas have become more impoverished economically because of the inroads of the national economic order into them, totally annihilating their indigenous economic practices and institutions. The egalitarian socio-economic order marked by communal ownership of the means of production, a strong sense of solidarity, collective endeavour and community welfare-oriented value system has been substituted by the national economic order characterised by private ownership, individualism and self-aggrandisement. For quite some time these societies were hanging on the balance-unwilling to come within the

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fold of the dominant order and incapable of resisting the onslaught. However, the dominant order (i.e. the national economic order) made a clean sway over the tribal indigenous order, leaving only nostalgic memories of the sweet past. Now there is no use lamenting over the past. The economic emancipation of the tribal people now lies in getting themselves integrated with the national economic order with emphasis on the formation and development of local skills (including entrepreneurial ability) so that they can diversify their occupations and partake increasingly of the benefits of national developmental measures.⁸

The problem of developing entrepreneurship is more difficult and complex in the tribal areas, since the prevailing psycho-cultural, economic and institutional factors are not conducive to the development of local entrepreneurship. Yet this will have to be done if development is not to be accompanied social tensions. Induction of non-tribal entrepreneurs will be merely a temporary palliative. Road development of the tribal areas will ensue when entrepreneurs from among themselves emerge.

The national entrepreneurial development programme will have to be tailored to suit the requirements of the tribal areas. It must have among others the following components :

(1) First, there must be a comprehensive understanding of the tribal socio-economic and cultural practices, values and the tribal ethos in general. The factors inhibiting enterprise and material prosperity must be identified. This will require a thorough study of the tribal communities. Without an identification of the factors standing in the way of enterprise and material prosperity, training, financial support and follow-up actions are not going to be of any help.

(2) Secondly, an inventory of natural resources of each tribal area has to be carefully

prepared based on economically and sociologically sound techno-economic surveys. This will indicate the pattern as well as the potentials of development of each area.

(3) In order to motivate the tribal youth to take to improved agricultural practices, trade, commerce and industries, disseminating information regarding various developmental schemes is of primary importance. There are serious information gaps in all tribal societies. Financial, technical and infrastructural support available under each scheme for setting up new enterprises should be made available to them. Disseminating information should constitute an important course content of entrepreneurial development programme.

(4) If the entrepreneurial development programmes have to be an effective mechanism for broadening the entrepreneurial base in the tribal areas, follow-up actions are of vital importance. They include counselling and support to the potential entrepreneur in his enterprise building efforts by helping him with the services required for providing project ideas, in selecting location and putting in touch with financial institutions.

(5) The district industries centres and also officials in various departments connected directly or indirectly with the development of industries must act with the spirit of promoters rather than of internal auditors.

(6) Training of potential entrepreneurs should be linked up with education at the institutional level so that they develop an attitude towards independent economic pursuits rather than becoming aspirants for white colour job. The technical educational institutions must put more emphasis on practice-oriented education.

(7) Regarding financial support, the procedure should be simplified and made more

flexible to suit the requirements of genuine entrepreneurs. The financial institutions should, however, have greater vigilance over the use of funds to ensure that public money is not misutilized.

(8) The greatest hurdle to entrepreneurial development in the tribal areas is the possibility of earning easy money by selling and letting out licenses and contracts. This has

to be stopped if entrepreneurship is to develop. Nothing is more detrimental to tribal development than such easy earnings.

(9) The institution entrusted with the entrepreneurial development programme in the tribal areas should draw upon the expertise of anthropologists, economists and other social scientists having knowledge of the tribal societies.

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Protective Legislations in British Tribal India

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Contemporary tribal India continues to present a variety of uniqueness in terms of life and cultures. And it can invite a marathon debate if we start unravelling the same, mapping various tribes and regions of Indian sub-continent. Numerous categories can be highlighted in terms of traits like economy, social organisation, religion, social control and certain other major cultural traits. Though a single tribe has usually been characterized as homogeneous, but multi-tribal situations have always posed for heterogeneity of various forms and magnitudes. It is not only the historical perspective which supports such an explanation, but even the current conditions subscribe well to such a reality. The fairly long history of culture contact among tribals and between the tribals and the non-tribals has largely not interrupted in the earlier complexity of tribal living. Rather, in many instances the acculturative influences have added to the areas of divergence. And many a times even the intended policies and programmes provided fillip to such trends.

In certain parts of the country, a large number of tribal groups identified positive reference groups in the neighbouring non-tribal populations. Consequently it led to the borrowing of many alien traits having deep roots in non-tribal way of life. This was resorted to with the intention of elevating the social

position, thereby accepting the superiority and dominance of others. In the generation of such vital processes, certain interested groups and individuals, among non-tribals, exploited the situation for personal and undesirable ends.

Aiming at, and borrowing from wider social systems and religions, thus, came, many a times, hard on the tribal aboriginals. Since the tribals, more so in early stages were determined to strike at higher level of alien systems, they ignored the other side where problems went on piling up. And even to this day their poverty, ignorance, exploitation, ill-health etc. have survived. At the same time some individuals and agencies, in the name of missionaries and reformists, enthused shift from tribal to wider non-tribal patterns while propagating for latter's superiority. Such intended attempts at debasing of tribal living, without a solid viable alternative and without curbing the ill intentions of certain sections of people, added to the rise of new problems among the tribals. In certain cases the rapid growth of culture contact created favourable conditions for assimilation of tribals into the stronger neighbouring streams. Those in the process could hardly anticipate of certain unintended consequences. In due course, such an assimilation got speeded up till some concerned persons (officials as well as non officials), more

so from outside, realised of the illconsequences of haphazard contact.

The tribals, for various reasons, have always attracted the attention of non tribals, more so of those who captured power and position. The nature of equation has, however, been varying; sometimes friendly and other times of hostility and indifference. The factors governing relationship between tribals and the non-tribals have themselves been varied, depending upon the background and intensions of insiders as well as the outsiders who penetrated into tribal pockets at one stage or the other. Since the customary laws of the tribals and the formal legislations of those who overpowered and administered them, considerably varied, some adjustment, in terms of relationship could be thought of and proposed. In certain situations the tribals were just ignored, and at times even subjected to many hardships. On the other hand some did suggest and even implemented certain policies and enactments in the interest of tribals. How far such measures could be effective is another question.

Those who expressed concern to protect interests of tribals reacted in two ways. In the first instance they proposed for direct measures whereby certain schemes and programmes were designed for implementation among the tribals. This could relate to the social or economic life of the people. Second, and the more popular have been the indirect measures. These included protective legislations of various kinds enacted from time to time. On certain occasions the direct and indirect measures were synthesised to gear up the intended process.

In British India there came strong arguments about the ill-effects of culture contact on tribal people. And since the contact, in those days, was more of haphazard nature,

the observations made spoke of their validity. J. H. Hutton (1931) explained the evil effects of contact on Indian tribes. On similar lines S. C. Roy made depth study of Birhor and Korwa tribes. Likewise, D. N. Majumdar wrote on the degeneration in case of Ho tribe. The devastating effect of overhasty and unregulated processes of uplift and civilization were again highlighted by Varrier Elwin (1939) in his study of Baiga tribe. Elwin further stated that because of the missionaries feelings of cultural and religious superiority, they are responsible for disturbing their cultural integration and inculcating a feeling of inferiority among the Adivasis. And some of the missionaries and social reformers were even stated to be responsible for the creation of separatist and anti-national tendencies.

Within the above purview, a commonly accepted policy in British India was that of 'isolation' or segregation of the tribal people. The underlying factors, in addition to what has been explained above, were many. The then rulers realized that administration in farflung and interior tribal areas would be difficult. The isolation of tribals, it was felt, would keep them away from political infection which was then catching momentum. Another assumption was that the tribals were better and happier in their natural surroundings and traditional socio-cultural milieu. It was further realized that isolation would protect the tribals against hostility and exploitation, which they found towards increase. As isolationists the Britishers, in position, declared certain contiguous and thickly populated tribal belts as the 'Excluded' and 'Partially Excluded' areas. The policy of isolation was supported by the then separatist anthropologists who advocated for tribal reserves. They sought the plea that in colonial countries, many tribals

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could not withstand the impact of aggressive western culture and became extinct. And for them, isolation, broadly speaking referred to a phenomenon wherein a group of people or a community was disconnected from other communities and resided in remote pockets having their own distinct way of life. It could be in a relative form—complete, partial etc. Subscribing to isolation, Elwin (1939) suggested for the establishment of 'National Park' in which Baiga and other tribes could take refuge. His tone appeared stronger later (1941). Within the writings of Elwin, Hutton, Roy, Majumdar, etc., the then anthropologists were labelled as 'isolationists' and 'no-changer'.

Within the framework of policy of isolation and the creation of 'Excluded' and 'Partially Excluded' areas, some protective legislations were enacted. And one of these, specially applicable to north-east tribal India, is of more relevance here. To avoid disorganisation in tribal social and economic life, then being generated by the plainsmen, and to minimise tribal non-tribal contact, the Britishers promulgated Inner Line Regulation in 1873. This regulation aimed at controlling of trade and industry in tribal areas of north-east. This was done in the interest of tribals, putting some curb on outsiders and their entry into the interior tribal pockets. Indirectly it discouraged trade and industry, then being geared up in tribal areas under the monopoly of plainsmen. Then the regulation also aimed at restricting the transfer of land to non-tribals, coming from outside, and thereby curb land alienation. And with the restraint in entry into interior tribal settlements, the other channels of exploitation, say through money-lending, would, it was thought, also be curbed. Thus, the underlying idea, broadly speaking, was to protect tribals from people coming from more advanced communities. The protection

and preservation of tribal life and culture were again ensured by the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874 which provided for special tribal administration. This excluded the tribal areas from the operation of ordinary laws of the country. The exclusion of backward tracts from the jurisdiction of Provincial Government was also suggested by Montague-Chelmsford Report of 1918. Showing increasing concern to tribal affairs, and to protect tribal heritage, the tribal areas were divided into 'Wholly Excluded Areas' and Areas of Modified Exclusion', according to Government of India Act, 1919. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, these areas were regrouped as 'Excluded' and 'Partially Excluded' areas. In case of the then Assam, the Partially Excluded Areas were within the jurisdiction of Minister, and the Totally Excluded Areas under the personal discretion of the Governor. But even in case of Partially Excluded Areas the Governor could overrule ministerial advice, or Act made by Assam Legislature. The Deputy Commissioners, in these areas, administered the districts but they were under the direct control of Governor whose direction and judgement prevailed over them. Below direct the tribal agencies themselves looked after the administration. In other words the tribals enjoyed considerable autonomy. Even after Indian independence the tribal areas of north-east, mostly those that were under Total and Partially Excluded category, were put under Sixth Schedule of Indian Constitution, as suggested by the Sub-Committee, under Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights and Minorities of Constituent Assembly, headed by Gopinath Bordoloi. This was done keeping in view special socio-economic conditions of tribal north-east, and to confer sufficient autonomy on tribals. District Councils of Autonomous Districts were made responsible

for administration of the District, with special financial, legislative and administrative powers given to them. This, it was assumed, would minimise exploitation and outside domination. In case of District Councils too the Governor reserved the right to veto or to suspend any Act of District Council in the wider national interest.

In the post-Indian independence period, the shift in policy from 'isolation' to 'integration' of the tribal people has had wider repercussions. Except certain prohibited and Inner Line tribal areas, the rest are completely open to the non-tribals. And this was thought a necessity for carrying the programmes of

planned development to the tribal areas, to meet the Constitutional commitment for special efforts for bringing about social and economic change among the tribal people. Integration of tribals, through such a strategy, again provides for respect to tribal values, sentiments emotions. It does avoid element of imposition, but at the same time does not support earlier approaches of isolation and assimilation. And to promote the lately aimed integration, fresh set of direct and indirect measures have been proposed. The British protective legislations and their after-efforts in certain parts of tribal India could not be found compatible with the democratic traditions and socialism proposed in independent India.

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Constituent Assembly and Protective Measures for Tribals

P. N. Hazarika*

The framers of the Constitution of India were quite alive to the varied conditions of development among the different communities of India. In the Preamble to the Constitution they have professed to secure to all citizens of India :—

- 1) Justice—Social, economic and political ;
- 2) Equality of status and opportunity and to promote among them all ;
- 3) Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation.

In order to achieve the constitutional objectives, various provisions had been made in the Draft Constitution providing a number of safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These safeguards provide inter alia, for representation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, appointment of Ministers incharge of tribal welfare in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, appointment of a Minister incharge of the welfare of the autonomous districts and autonomous regions in Assam, their representation in the Central and State Services, abolition of the practice of untouchability, throwing open to them of Hindu religious institutions, admission into educational institutions etc. Special provisions have also been made for their social, educational and economic advancement. Accordingly, Article 46 under the Directive

Principles of the Constitution enjoins "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

If we peep into the historic discussions and debates of the Constituent Assembly, we will find that the necessity of providing safeguards was strongly felt by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru who for the first time mentioned about these safeguards while moving the Resolution of the fifth day of the first session on 13th December, 1946 outlying the proposed main structure of the Constitution. The Resolution among other things stated :—

"This Constituent Assembly declares its firm and solemn resolved to proclaim India as an Independent Sovereign Republic and to draw up for her future governance a constitution—

- (6) Wherein adequate safeguards shall provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas and depressed and other backward classes."

The Resolution was adopted unanimously by the Constituent Assembly on 22nd January, 1947. In order to translate this principle into practice the Constituent Assembly divided

these sections of people mentioned in the Resolution into four classes, viz :—

- 1) Minorities ;
- 2) Scheduled Castes ;
- 3) Scheduled Tribes and
- 4) Other Backward Classes.

Minorities included Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, etc. Those who have been suffering from the age old stigma of untouchability are classified as Scheduled Castes and the groups of people who live in jungle and hills leading primitive and sub-human life and segregated from the rest of the society are classified as Scheduled Tribes. In addition to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the communities, castes or social groups which are also backward socially, economically and educationally when compared to other sections of the society, are classified as other Backward Classes. It will be noticed that initially Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru in his Resolution dealt with all the three categories of people together.

Since the number of minority communities was many and since the tribal areas, tribal people and their ways and methods of living including their culture were quite dissimilar, the Constituent Assembly appointed Advisory Committee to study and report to it as the steps necessary to be taken in the light of the objectives of the proposed Constitution. In this connection it may be mentioned that in paragraph 20 of the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16, 1946 stipulated constitution of an Advisory Committee on rights of citizens, minorities and tribals and excluded areas set up. The Cabinet Missions scheme provided for the constitution of one single Committee for the whole country to deal with questions relating to the administration of the Tribal and Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas. In

pursuance of paragraphs 20 of the Cabinet Missions's statement, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant moved a Resolution in the Constituent Assembly on 24th January, 1947 for the Constitution of the Advisory Committee. The Constituent Assembly after a threadbare discussion adopted the Resolution same day with amendment. The paragraph 2 of the Resolution provided as follows :—

"The Advisory Committee shall appoint sub-committee to prepare schemes for the administration of the North Western tribal areas, the North Eastern tribal areas and the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas. Each of such Sub-Committees may co-opt more than 2 members from the particular tribal territory under its consideration for the time being, to assist in its work in relation to that territory."

In pursuance of the Resolution dated 24th January, 1947 an Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities, etc. was constituted and the Advisory Committee appointed a number of Sub-Committees. For the province of Assam a Sub-Committee known as "North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee" was constituted under the Chairmanship of Gopi Nath Bordoloi. This Sub-Committee presented its report to the Chairman, Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights etc. on 29th July, 1947 incorporating its recommendations.

It is relevant to mention that the Constituent Assembly appointed a Drafting Committee consisting of Constitutional Advisers to prepare the Draft Constitution for giving effect to its decisions. The Chairman of the Drafting Committee was Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who after a hard labour of six months presented the

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Draft Constitution to the Constituent Assembly. The Drafting Committee took into account the recommendations of the Minorities Committees as well as the Sub-Committees in making provisions in the Draft Constitution.

The Members of the Constituent Assembly expressed their great anxiety to bring about economic stability of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by carrying out the obligations put down in the Draft Constitution since the aims and objectives of the Constitution were to establish a social democracy transcending the distinctions of caste and outcaste of rich and poor, the Constituent Assembly adopted a number of special provisions for this purpose and inserted in our Constitution. These provisions, as already mentioned, reflected in a number of articles of the Draft Constitution.

Article 292, 294, 296 and 299 of Part XIV of the Draft Constitution dealt with the various safeguards for the Minorities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes of people. It will be worthwhile to mention that several provision made in the Draft Constitution were changed during the discussion in the Constituent Assembly. Articles contained in Part XIV Special provision relating to minorities contained in the Draft Constitution were also modified. For example in the Draft Constitution Articles 292, 296 and 299 contained the following provisions relating to the Minorities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

292. Seats shall be reserved in the House of the people for—

- (a) the Muslim community and the Scheduled Castes ;
- (b) the Scheduled Tribes in every State for the time

Reservation of seats for minorities in the House of the People.

Claims of minority communities to services and posts.

Special Officers for minorities for the Union and the States.

being specified in Part I of the first Schedule ; and
(c) the Indian Christian community in the States of Madras and Bombay ; according to the scale prescribed in sub-clause (b) of clause (5) of article 67 of the Constitution.

296. Subject to the provisions of the next succeeding article the claims of all minority communities shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in 35 the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State for the time being specified in Part I of the First Schedule.

299. (1) There shall be a Special Officer for minorities for the Union who shall be appointed by the President, and a Special Officer for minorities for each State for the time being specified in Part I of the First Schedule who shall be appointed by the Governor of the State.

(2) It shall be the duty of the Special Officer for the Union to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for

minorities under this Constitution in connection with the affairs of the Union and to report to the President upon the working of the safeguards at such intervals as the President may direct, and the President shall cause all such reports to be laid before before Parliament.

(3) It shall be the duty of the Special Officer for a State so specified to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for minorities under this Constitution in connection with the affairs of the State and to report to the Governor of the State upon the working of the safeguards at such intervals as the Governor may direct and the Governor shall cause all such reports to be laid before the legislature of the State.

It is pertinent to mention that the word "Minorities" is so general that it might apply to linguistic minority and to minorities based on religion, castes, etc. There is no definition of minority in the whole of the Draft Constitution. It is not stated anywhere in the Draft Constitution who the minorities are. No community has been classified as a minority.

The report of the Minorities Committee provided that all minorities should have two benefits or privileges, viz. representation in the legislatures and representation in the services. Paragraph 9 of the Report stated as follows :—

"In the all India and provincial services the claims of all minorities shall be kept in view in making appointments to these services consistently with the consideration of efficiency in the Administration." This was the original proposition passed by the Constituent Assembly. Subsequently the Advisory Committee came to the conclusion on the consent of the two minorities—Muslims and Christians that they were not to be treated as minorities. When the Constituent Assembly accepted that the only minorities provided for in this manner were the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, obviously the Drafting Committee was bounded by the decision of the House and to alter the Article in terms of said decision. Therefore the Muslims and the Christians were not treated as minorities and they were not to have either of the two privileges. In view of these controversies the article 299 was redrafted specifying only the two communities viz. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the expression "Minorities" occurring in this article was omitted.

Before the drafts of Articles 292, 294 and 299 were taken up for consideration by the Constituent Assembly, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee Dr. B. R. Ambedkar moved amendments to all these articles as follows :—

"299 (1) Seats shall be reserved in the House of the people for—

- (a) Scheduled Castes ;
- (b) the Scheduled Tribes except the scheduled tribes in the tribal areas of Assam.
- (c) the scheduled tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam.

(2) The number of seats reserved in any State for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes under clause (1) of this article shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats allotted to that State in the House of the People as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or part of State as the case may be, in respect of which seats are so reserved bears to the total population of that State.

"294 (1) Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes except the Scheduled tribes in the tribal areas of Assam in the Legislative Assembly of every State for the time being specified in Part I or Part III of the First Schedule.

(2) The number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly of any State under clause (1) of this article shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats in the Assembly as the population to the Scheduled Castes in the State or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State or part of the State as the case may be, in respect of which seats are so reserved bears to the total population of the State.

(5) The constituencies for the seats reserved for any autonomous district of the State of Assam shall not comprise any area outside that district except in the case of the constituency comprising the cantonment and the municipality of Shillong.

"299 (1) There shall be a Special Officer for minorities to be appointed by the President.

(2) It shall be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for minorities under this Constitution and to report to the President upon the working of the safeguards at such intervals as the President may direct, and the President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each House of Parliament".

It will be quite interesting to note that when the Article 292 was incorporated in the Draft Constitution there was no proposal for fixing any time limit regarding reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for Parliament and State Legislatures. In their reports the Advisory Committee for Tribal and Excluded Areas had suggested some protection for the tribals and no limitation was fixed as regards the periods for which such protection should be provided. But Dr. B. R. Ambedkar moved a motion introducing a new Article namely 295-A. It provided as follows :

"That after Article 295, the following new article be inserted :-

"295-A. Notwithstanding anything contained in the foregoing provisions of this Part, the provisions of this Constitution relating to the reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes either in the House of the People or in the Legislative Assembly of State shall cease to have effect on the expiration of a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution."

It was decided in the Constituent Assembly, in a motion tabled by Sardar Patel, that the

system of reservation of seats for minorities other than the Scheduled Castes in the Legislatures be abolished and that the reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes shall be limited to ten years only. The communities referred to in this resolution were Muslims, Sikhs, Scheduled Castes and Indian Christians. It was held that in the context of a free and independent India, and according to the present conditions, there should not be any reservation of seats for religious communities. Therefore, it did not affect the reservation of seats for the Scheduled tribes. In the report of the Advisory Committee dated 11th May 1949 submitted by Sardar Patel to the Constituent Assembly on the subject of political safeguards for minorities, it had been specifically stated that nothing contained in the resolution passed by the Minorities Advisory Committee shall effect the recommendations made by the North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee and the Excluded and partially Excluded Areas (Other than Assam) Sub-Committee with regard to the tribals in the legislatures. Several members had opposed the provision of 10 years time limit made in the new article 295-A on the ground that in the Vth and VIth Schedules in the Draft Constitution, a Tribal Advisory Committee had been provided to advise the Governments of the States in all matters pertaining to the administration of the Scheduled tribes and the welfare of the tribal people in all states and three-fourths of the Tribal Advisory Committee will consist of the elected representatives of the scheduled tribes in the Legislature of the States. If there was no reservation for the tribes, it would be difficult to give effect to the provisions laid down in the schedule V of the Constitution. However, the article was adopted as it was and the time limit of 10 years has been extended from time

to time. The latest amendment e.g. the Constitution (forty-fifth Amendment) Act, 1980 extended the period of reservation for forty years from the commencement of the Constitution.

In summing up I would like to state that the Constituent Assembly had laid the foundation of the Constitution of India providing safeguards and protection of the scheduled tribes viz. representation of scheduled tribes in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, their representation in the Central and State Services, for the social, educational and economic advancement in tune with Article 46 of the Constitution. Although provisions are made in the Draft Constitution in Article 292, 294, 296 and 299 these were finally numbered 332, 334, 335 and 338 to the Constitution of India. It must be admitted that economic development will need to be accompanied by efforts to encourage people to organise themselves for full participation in developmental activities. The Constitution envisages speedy implementation of various developmental projects. Only then it would be possible to bring about material prosperity of the tribal people. I conclude by referring to the pledge contained in the historic Resolution moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and taken by the members of the Constituent Assembly on 14th August, 1947 just before the dawn of Indian Independence which is comprehensive. The pledge for the services to the poor and the depressed people is vividly brought out in para 4 of the Resolution in the following words :

That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we might fulfil the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance

and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.

It is hoped that with the goodwill of the people belonging to the majority community and keeping faith in the future and in the leadership of our country, the tribal people will be able to develop themselves and achieve prosperity.

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Dimensions of contact among tribal and non-tribal populations in north-east India : As reflected in folklore

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Contact among various communities, tribal and non-tribal, take place along two broad lines—physical and cultural, the actual process of contact normally involving, different combinations of the two.

It can be said that there exists a situation of "physical contact", whether inter-tribal or tribal-non-tribal, when two or more communities live in close spatial proximity of one another, even if there be little of direct reaction resulting from such proximity. The more obvious dimension of physical contact is, however, biological contact—the inter-mixture of blood among different racial or ethnic elements either at the individual or at the group level. Although mating among the tribal communities are dictated by strict traditional rules, unions outside the prescribed areas often do take place. While in certain conditions inter-group marriages happen to be a common feature, we have also instances of individual biological contact when, for example, chiefs or warriors take wives from outside the community or when love affairs between individuals of different communities result in unions, with or without social approval. Such physical contacts are also normally accompanied by cultural inter-changes in different degrees.

When physical proximity results in situations of culture contact, they may take different forms which may be termed 'negative' and 'positive'. Negatively, there may be inter-tribe or tribal-non-tribal rivalry, tension, conflict, or even open hostility. But the situation may also be positive, marked by understanding, friendship and co-operation.

As has been pointed out by Herskovits, "Contacts are also to be classified as friendly or hostile. So much stress has been laid on the more dramatic instances of hostile contact, that the less striking—but probably more numerous—examples of friendly association between peoples has tended to be lost sight of (Herskovits 1974 : 476).

Contact may also be associated with economic and political factors like trade and administration.

It may be pointed out that even when the contact situation is of a hostile nature, cultural inter-change is not ruled out. Again, in situations of most intimate contact mutual borrowing may be the minimum and selective, with or without external pressure, or there may be "almost complete acceptance of the ways of another people". (Herskovits 1974 : 482).

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Here is the most interesting field of culture contact involving such processes as diffusion and acculturation.

Of special interest and meaning in the context of the Indian Society and Culture are the integration and assimilation of tribal elements into a "non-tribal" complex developing through a process of continuous contact. There are instances galore of the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition constantly impinging upon each other. One could also discern plenty of evidences of the processes of universalization and parochialization at work.

Let us come to the north-eastern region. As is well known, the region presents a picture of almost bewildering cultural variety and diversity, particularly in regard to its tribal population. Apart from the fact that the largest number of different tribal communities live in the hills and plains of the region, what is striking is that we have here the tribal and the non-tribal, the acculturated and the assimilated, the sanskritized and the non-sanskritized, the highly "refined" and the patently "primitive" all co-existing in a remarkable state of juxtaposition. While such a position is perhaps true of some other parts of India, although in a much lesser degree, what stands out in this region is not only the predominance of the tribal element in terms of the number of such communities and their overall ratio in the total indigenous population of the region but also in terms of the dominant presence of markedly tribal social and cultural strands in the socio-cultural fabrics of the "non-tribal" societies. (Datta 83). Particularly in Assam, the process of assimilation and absorption of various tribal populations into the Hindu Assamese fold—a process which has practically stopped working in other parts of India since quite some time past—has been in operation in this region till

comparatively recent times and cannot be said to have completely stopped working even today (See Chatterjee, 1974 : 52). Involved in all this are the different dimensions of contact discussed above.

It is most interesting and significant that reflections of all such dimensions of contact are to be found in the rich folklore material of this region. Such folklore data, consisting of both verbal and non-verbal items, can help in a big way in testing and authenticating theories and hypotheses concerning the cultural dynamics at play, involving not only this region but a much larger area of the subcontinent and even other contiguous regions located outside.

We shall now cite or refer to some selected folklore items, mostly verbal, of this region which bear witness to, or are indicative of, various contact situations and processes.

Now, if contact means not only "being or coming together" but also the absence of isolation, both physical and mental, and the awareness about "commonness" and "togetherness", then we have a whole range of folklore material of the narrative genre which exemplify such awareness and consciousness, and that too, from communities which have normally been associated by outsiders, including scholars, with remoteness and exclusiveness, both physical and cultural. In fact, the degree of openness and catholicity of view contained in many tribal myths and legends is simply staggering.

A considerable volume of tribal myths and legends from different parts of the region are concerned not only with the coming of the first progenitors of the respective communities but of those of neighbouring communities as well—not excluding the "non-tribals" in the

plains. A Karbi myth speaks of the eggs laid by the mythical bird wo-plakpi, out of which come the first men—a Naga (Naka), a Kachari (Ramsa), a Khasi (Chomang) an Assamese (Aham), and, of course, a Karbi. (Gogoi 1968, Datta 1985). A Taraon (Digaru) Mishmi tale speaks of how the first human children were carried by water to the plains and how all others except the eldest son remained in the plains to become the Assamese (Elwin 1958 : 133-134). The Tarao Mishmis also have a tale about the first human boy who got his wife from the tusk of his elephant father and also many soldiers from whom came the Assamese, the Akas, the Daflas, the Miris (Misings) and the Mikirs (Karbi) (Elwin 1958 : 133-134). There is a Singpho tale about how different races including the Assamese came down by ladders made of different materials (Elwin 1958 : 126-127). The Hrussos (Akas) have a similar but more elaborate story which is remarkable for its broad sweep of observation. It begins like this :

Long ago all men descended from heaven to earth by means of ladders. The Assamese and Akas of royal blood came by a golden ladder ; the remaining Akas had a silver ladder ; the Tibetans and Monpas were given a ladder of iron ; the Daflas and Abors had to be satisfied with a bamboo ladders ; whilst the Cacharis and Khoas shared a plaintain ladder, (Kennedy 1981).

A Wanchoo tale has an equally broad, if not broader, range of vision in respect of both ethnic groups and their habitats :

Two brothers once come together from the place called Uphannu to the Patkoi Mountains. There they sacrificed a dog and agreed to divide the land between them. The elder brother remained in Burma, the younger brother went on into India. On the Indian side

there were the Noctes and Wanchos and many other people, even people in the plains. The Wanchos were the eldest of all and the Assamese are his children.

At first there were no different clans or tribes for all were one. Then at that time a great flood poured over the hills of Assam and levelled some of them and the land became flat. Since there was not enough water in the hills, some of the children of the Wanchos went down to the plains and became the Assamese (Elwin 1958 : 46-47).

The Angami Naga tale, *The Naga and the plainsmen*, (Hutton 1969 : 160-1) and an Ao Naga tale (Mills 1973 : 310-11) may also be cited in this context. Many other tales contain the veiled suggestion that originally all men were brothers who got separated later. Take, for example, this Angami Naga tale of the Tower of Babel :

Ukepenopfu was the first being. Her descendants are very many. Instead of dying she was translated into Heaven. Later on her descendants thought to communicate with her by building a tower upto Heaven, up which they would go and talk to her. She, however, knowing their thoughts, said to herself, "They will all expect presents and I have no presents for so many men. The tower must be stopped before it get higher." So she made all the men working at the tower talk different languages, so that they could not understand one another, (Hutton 1969 : 265).

The Karbi story of the Tower of Babel is more complex and has other ramifications. Here a Karbi king marries two wives, one a Karbi, the other an Assamese. Ram, the son by the Karbi wife, is very strong. He marries a girl coming out of an egg, and their progeny

fill and dominate the whole world. It is they who plan to build the ladder up to heaven, whereupon the alarmed inhabitants of heaven make them speak different languages leading to the abandonment of the project to build the ladder.

There are also various traditions current among the different tribes of Manipur about the common origin of, and close connections between, the tribals of the hills and the non-tribals of the valley (Hodson 1911 : 8-17; 1908 : 4-10).

Significantly some myths go further to encompass not only non-tribals of the neighbourhood but also of distant lands. The Sema Naga story of the origin of the tribes begins thus : "They do say that of all the Foreigners, Angamis, Aos, Lhotas and we Semas had the same ancestors, and the same mother, they say" (Hutton 1921 : 352).

Let us take a few specimens suggestive of direct contact through trade and administrative links.

There is an interesting Ao Naga story—most probably based on fact—of how the Aos and the Assamese set up a *hat* (market) through mutual understanding and co-operation. Another Ao Naga story tells of a temporary tension arising out of the head hunting practised by Nagas in the plains and the eventual amicable settlement at the intervention of the Assam king. The semas have a delightful story concerning the origin of the Kithang clan which presents a good-humoured account of hills-plains rivalry. The story speaks of a series of strange encounters, each involving a veritable battle of wits, between the hillmen and the Assamese of the plains, in which the former have the better of the latter (Mills 1926 : 256-59).

And of course there are plenty of other kinds of material which also highlight inter-tribal and tribal-non-tribal mistrust and intrigue, even conflict and hostility. Here are just a few representative specimens :

A song of the Kuki war runs thus :

"Kekheche, my father Kekheche, my father, when you go to raid in the country of the Kukis, in the country of the Kukis, take heed lest you be wounded.

Else any one pluck a Kuki flower, pluck a Kuki flower" (Hutton 1969 : 363).

And plucking a Kuki flower is nothing but an euphemism for taking a Kuki head.

The two well-known Karbi legends centring round Rongpharpi and Thong Nokbe narrate the traumatic experiences of the Karbis during their days of close contact, under tutelage, with the Kacharis and the Khasis respectively. (Datta 1985). Similarly, Mising tradition consistently attributes their migration to the riverine plains of Assam to inter-clan clashes among the Adis of Arunachal Hills to which their ancestors originally belonged (Pamegam 1977, Datta 1985).

Now let us come to the field of diffusion and acculturation about which excellent exemplification is provided by folklore material, both verbal and non-verbal. As is well-known folktales have always been accepted as valuable tools for the testing of the diffusion theory so popular in cultural anthropology. Herskovits has emphasised how folk tales can be used so effectively in the study of historical contact between non-literate peoples. "It will be remembered" he says, "that a story is composed of independent variables each of which can travel separately. Therefore, when we find such a complicated cultural element as a story widely distributed, the conclusion is inescapable

that it must have been diffused and not independently developed in each locality where it is told" (Herskovits 1974 : 465).

There are innumerable examples of tales with identical types and motifs that are current among diverse communities, tribal and non-tribal, distributed over the hills and plains of this region. Let us have a few examples.

Traditions among different communities in the hills and plains about the creation of the world, for example, have some strikingly similar patterns. The idea that the world arose from a primeval ocean is very widespread and is found among several Arunachal tribes (Elwin 1968 : 1), and also among tribes of the Assam plains and hills like the Deuris, the Dimasas (Goswami 1980 : 1-2, 7-10) and the Bodos. Several groups attribute the emergence of the earth to the prawn, the crab or some particular specimen of fish. Many myths speak of direct creation by heavenly bodies. Creation myths of several groups speak of a cosmic egg (Elwin 1968). The belief that the sky and earth were originally joined together, were later separated or reunited is found among a number of tribes, particularly in the Arunachal hills (Elwin 1968, 1970). But more widely distributed are the stories with common motifs centring round the sun and the moon. In Arunachal Pradesh "there is a very common belief..... that originally the sun was too hot. It is sometimes supposed that at first there were two or more suns which shone together at the same time, thus creating excessive heat, or in turn so that there was no night." (Elwin 1968 : 35). Such beliefs are reflected in the myths of several other tribes in other parts of the region. Belief about the subsequent cooling of the sun (or one of the two sons which became the moon) by an arrow being thrown at it (cf. *Numit*

Kappa story of the Meiteis) or by some other agency is also fairly widespread. The sun being female and the moon male and the moon's marks being the result of something having been thrown at it are also commonly found motifs. Stories about the eclipse have also identical patterns (Elwin 1968, Rafy 1920, etc.) Motifs of incest between original brother and sister, or even mother and son are also fairly common in myths of this region. Some other popular motifs are as follows : earthquakes caused by an animal, the power of body dirt, the rivalry between pig and dog and between tiger and cat, disenchantment by the destruction of the hero's skin, adventures and misadventures of the trickster and the numskull, the tiger being scared by an imaginary dreadful thing *Dighal-thengiya* in Assamese and *Tapta* in Manipuri, the old man and the old woman being cheated by the cunning animal (the jackel in Assamese and a number of Assam tribal versions), the simpleton who is plotted against by jealous relatives and who successfully turns the table against them (Assamese, Karbi, Naga and other versions), the step-mother's ill-treatment of step-children and the ultimate prevalence of justice (Assamese, Manipuri and various tribal versions), etc. (See Anderson 1895 ; Barkataki 1972 ; Borooah 1954 ; Elwin 1968, 1970 ; Goswami 1970, 1976, 1980 ; Hutton 1969 ; Lyall & Stack 1908 ; Pamegam 1977 ; Singh, Y. K. 1963 ; etc.)

As has been hinted at earlier, the acculturation situation in the Indian context has mostly been one of Aryan-Hindu influence over non-Aryan non-Hindu tribal stocks, leading eventually in a great many cases to integration, assimilation and absorption of the erstwhile tribal elements into a "non-tribal" complex. But this "non-tribal" complex itself has all along been emerging in each region as

an ever-evolving conglomerate. Thanks to the continuous process of adoption of local tribal elements. The north-eastern region abound in living examples involving both these processes the sharp reflection of which is to be found in a considerable volume of folklore material. First, we have those myths and legends which are clearly suggestive of the process of Hinduisation and Sanskritisation of erstwhile tribal groups. Most of these pattern have a familiar pattern : whole groups, particularly ruling dynasties, are linked with Hindu gods or goddesses or with heroes or heroines of the epics by ascribing their ancestry to those personages or by some other convenient device. Thus the Koch kings of western Assam are linked with god Siva, the Ahom King with god Indra, the Kacharis with Bhima, the Manipuris with Arjuna, and so on. These are associated as much with the ingenuity of Brahman priests as with the eagerness of the groups concerned to acquire an "elevated" status. Equally significant is the process of identifying local tribal gods and goddesses with recognised gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon.

Next there are the cases of the adoption of the Hindu-Aryan myths, by different groups as culture items. Stories from two Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, particularly the former, have percolated very effectively to the tribal levels. In fact, there are in this region several tribal versions of the Ramayana like the Karbi, the Khampti and the Mizo versions.

On the other hand such Sanskrit works as the *Kalika Purana*, the *Yogini Tantra* and the *Hara-Gauri Samvada* composed in old Assam contain lots of material which speak of the acceptance of indigenous tribal modes and mores into the locally accepted "official"

Hindu-Aryan complex. Scholars like Dr. Banikanta Kakati and Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji have given masterly treatments of this topic (Kakati 1967 ; Chatterji 1974). Although in Manipur no such Sanskrit text has been composed, there has developed an imposing body of "Sanskritized" myths and legends which represent the movement of the Meities towards the Aryan-Hindu norms. Let us take two interesting examples of which the first one gives a legendary explanation of the Sanskrit name *Manipura* of the Meitei country, indicating the transition of the Meities to Vaishnavism through Saivism :

Siva and Umā descended from their heavenly abode in Kailāsa with the special intention of settling down in the land of Manipur for a sojourn..... (They) then went to the north-west of Manipur and stopped at *Koubru* or *Kumara Hill*. One of the reasons why they came to Manipur was that they wished to perform the *Rāsa* dance there. Once it had happened that when Krishna was dancing the *Rāsa* with the Gopis. Śiva and Devi Umā were acting as door keepers outside the dance area. Umā heard the music and the sound of the dance, and wished to see it, but Krishna did not permit her. He suggested Śiva and Umā finding some suitable spot where they could perform the *Rāsa* dance themselves. Seeking for such a proper place for this great *Rāsa* dance they came to Manipur, and thought that *Koubru Hill* would be such a place... the *Rāsa* dance of Śiva and Umā was arranged. The gods came with various instruments to assist in the dance to be held by the Father and Mother of the Universe. The serpent King Ananta illuminated the whole country with the gem (*maṇi*) that was on his head for the seven days and seven nights that the dance went on. For this, the land got its name of

Maṇi-pura, 'the City or Land of Gem'. (See Chatterji 1974 : 145-46).

The second example represents an attempt to ascribe the origin of Manipuri clans or sects to Hindu divinities :

Atiya-Guru-Shidaba had come out of the earth through the cavity which was created by the breath of Vishnu as the Boar. (Interestingly, the first men coming out of a cave is a very common motif in the origin myths of the Mizo-Kuki groups). Seven *Apsarases* or goddesses had arrived on earth with him. These goddesses (each of whom has her name in Meitheï) were married to the seven planet-gods, and each divine couple had a son. The seven sons became the ancestors of the seven *Shaleis* of clans or sects, and these *Shaleis* have been identified with Brahmanical gotras or clans. Thus—(1) *Angom*=Bhāradvāja, or Kausika gotra ; (2) *Ningthouia*=Sāṇḍila ; (3) *Lnwang*=Kāśyapa ; (4) *Khumol* or *Khumon*=Maudgalya corrupted to Madnu-Kulya ; (5) *Khabangangba*=Noimisa, or Bharadvaja ; (6) *Moirang*=Atreya ; and (7) *Chengloi*=Bharadvaja. The story of the seven clans being derived from these seven divine beings resembles the Hindu Puranic story of the seven celestial *risis* or sages being the ancestors of the seven clans of the Brahmins. (Chatterji 1974 : 148).

Again there is also the very interesting phenomenon of Buddhist influence from across the borders on different tribes of this region. While Tibetan Buddhism has sway over such tribes as the Monpas and the Sherdukpens, the affiliation of some other tribes of the Tai-Shan group like the Khamptis, the Phakes, the Naras, the Turungs and the Aitaniyas is with Burmese Buddhism. Buddhist world view and ethos of these two affiliations are clearly reflected in the folklore of the above tribes (See Elwin 1968, 1970). Interestingly, even

the Khampti Ramayana is a Buddhist version where Rama is a Bodhisattva.

Contact with Islam of the tribes of this region should offer another interesting field of study but till now not much folklore material concerning this field seems to have come to light. However, in the plains of Assam the contact of Islam with the indigenous Assamese populations has resulted in the birth of an exquisite body of folksongs, often accompanied by appropriate dance movements, which incorporate Islamic teachings in a patently indigenous Assamese format, both literal and musical, affiliated to traditional Assamese Vaishnava and other folk forms. Known as *Zikir* and *Jari*, they offer wonderful examples of integration at the spiritual, social and artistic levels.

And of course, in modern times the impact of Christianity particularly on the tribal communities of this region has given rise to a whole new range of situations which has thrown up a vast and challenging field of study to the student of cultural dynamics. Although no specific study of folklore in this particular context is known to have been undertaken, one can gather much valuable information, providing an insight into the field from data spread over various works, published and unpublished.

We may pause here for a moment to have a look at the folklore material that bear the mark of 'political contact' to which we had the occasion to refer earlier. In Assamese, there are a number of well-known ballads which can be cited as examples in this context : *Barphukanar Geet* which relates the story of the dreaded Burmese invasion of Assam, *Maniram Dewanar Geet* narrating the touching events centring round Maniram Dewan, the rebel and patriot, who was hanged by the British, the

Song of *Bhulagurir Dhewa* containing an account of the rebellious conduct of the people of Phulaguri against the British administration and its aftermath, and *Dali Puran* which describes the famous peasant uprising in protest against unjust enhancement of taxes by the British Government. In Manipur a wholly new style of ballad-singing came into being as a result of political contact with the British: Known as Khongjomg Praba this form is associated with the village of that name where patriotic Manipuri heroes valiantly resisted the British.

I am reminded here of two very interesting song texts, one from Mizoram and the other from Nagaland, which owe their origin to the effect of the political contact with the British. The Mizo song has its theme the joining of the British army by Mizo youths during world War I. The Sema Naga song, quoted by Hutton, was composed in France by Sema Naga labourers about the same time. It runs as follows:

"O young bloods, go and search Shiyihe, mine elder brother, and you colleens for darling Losheli his sweet heart. Tell what he went to do; tell (her) that he went forth to pluck; tell (her) that he went forth to pluck a flower, a flower of the Germans he went to pluck, went forth to pluck and take. In going, in going, fare thee well. (Hutton, 1968 : 369).

The form is traditional but the entry of

new content is obvious.

Lastly, just a few words about the latest contact situation in which the craze for rapid development has brought in very heavy doses of modernization characterised by high-efficiency consumer economy, new democratic socio-political system, powerful mass media and westernized value system. (In the North-East a very fast change in the demographic content owing to the unusually heavy influx of non-indigenous populations has been an additional factor). While the initial effect of all this has been the disintegration or dislodgment of traditional cultures, there have almost invariably been reactions from the groups thus threatened with loss of identity—what has been called contra-acculturation by some anthropologists. Such groups have been frantically searching for their roots which they have generally discovered in their folk traditions. Thus there has been a re-emergence of folklore, but in a completely different set-up. Selected folklore items have been identified as symbolic of identity, often delinked from their original ritualistic and functional base and "made public". Secondly, the mass media have come in a big way to encompass the folklore items. As a result, there have been very obvious changes in the folklore items in respect of context, performance, function, communication and texture, and, quite inevitably, artificialism and commercialization have also come side by side. (Datta 1985c)

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About the Institute

With the approval of the erstwhile Ministry of Home Affairs (Present Ministry of Welfare), Government of India, the Directorate of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, was created in January 1977 as a centrally sponsored scheme on matching contribution. A full time Director was, however, appointed in July 1981 only. The Institute is required to study the problems not only of the scheduled tribes but scheduled castes as well.

Functions

As per guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Welfare (erstwhile Ministry of Home Affairs), Government of India, the main functions of the Tribal Research Institute are (1) Research, (2) Evaluation, (3) Planning and (4) Training. Publication of monographs, books, research papers, research bulletins, organisation of seminars and workshops and also participation in the exhibitions within and outside the state are some of its important functions.

The progress of the Assam T. R. I. in respect of its activities since its creation in 1977 is as follows :

Research

A. Studies completed.

1. Study on the socio-economic conditions of the Nishis inhabiting Lakhimpur and Darrang (Erstwhile) districts.
2. Transfer and Alienation of Tribal land in Assam.

3. Impact of enforcing liquor prohibition on the Bodo-Kacharis in a rural setting.
4. Study on the workings of the Gaon Panchayat Samabai Samitis in the Tribal Sub-plan areas and LAMPs in the hill areas of Assam.
5. Studies on the Madahis, Chutiyas, Koch-Rajbangshis, Morans, Mattaks, Chaodangs, Tai Buddhists including Aitonias and Turungs of Karbi Anglong District, Bakalias and Halams to examine whether they could be included in the list of Scheduled Tribes.
6. Study on the historical background of the Amri Karbis.
7. Study on the Assamese Sikh community to examine whether it can be included in the O.B.C. list.
8. Study on the Displacement of Tribals due to installation of industrial and irrigational complexes—a case study of Dhansiri Irrigation Project in Darrang District.
9. Study on the socio-economic conditions of the Bodiya community.
10. Study on the socio-economic conditions of Muslim Dhubis.
11. Study on the socio-economic conditions of the Kaibartas—a scheduled caste of Assam.
12. Study on the traditional Tribal Institutions.
13. A survey of sericulture industry among the scheduled tribe communities of Kokrajhar District of Assam.

14. Study on the socio-economic conditions of the Namasudras—a scheduled caste of Cachar & Karimganj Districts.

B. Studies in hand

1. Study on the displacement of tribals due to installation of Industrial and Irrigational complexes—study of the Jagiroad Paper Mills (H.P.C.) in Nagaon District.
2. Study on the incidence of school-dropouts from primary to secondary stage among the S/T & S/C students in Nagaon District.
3. Study on the problems of Forest Villages inhabited by tribals.

C. New studies proposed to be undertaken as per guidelines of the Ministry of Welfare.

1. Study of tribal handicrafts.
2. Study of the traditional tribal customary laws.
3. Study of tribal sports.
4. Study of tribal Herbal medicines.

Evaluation

A. Studies completed

1. Evaluation study of Kokrajhar I.T.D.P.
2. Evaluation study of the Individual Beneficiary schemes executed by the Assam Scheduled Castes Development Corporation in Dibrugarh District.
3. Evaluation study of Award of Pre-matric scholarships to the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and O.B.C. students.
4. In-depth evaluation study of the Chandrapur Gaon Panchayat Samabai Samiti.
5. Evaluation study of supply of milch animals among the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste communities in Jorhat District.

6. Evaluation study of the schemes executed by the Assam Scheduled Castes Development Corporation in Nagaon District.

B. Studies in hand

1. Evaluation study of the Dhemaji I.T.D.P.

C. New studies proposed to be undertaken as per guidelines of the Ministry of Welfare.

1. In-depth evaluation study of poverty alleviation programme in one I.T.D.P.
2. Evaluation study of effectiveness of protective legislation in respect of tribal land and forest in one I.T.D.P.

Planning

The Tribal Research Institute, Assam, has been helping the Department for Welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes, Government of Assam, in preparation of the Tribal Sub-plan and Scheduled Caste Component Plan. In addition to this the T.R.I. had performed the following works in respect of planning.

1. Completion of Indicators of Development in the Tribal Sub-plan Areas of Assam required by the Ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India, for the preparation of 7th Five Year Plan.

2. Preparation of 3 Nos. of I.T.D.P. reports by the Tribal Research Institute and the remaining 16 Nos. of I.T.D.P. reports were prepared under the guidance of the T.R.I. during the 5th Plan period.

3. Preparation of 17 Nos. of revised I.T.D.P. reports during 6th Plan period and submission of the same to the Ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India.

Training

A. Training courses already conducted

1. The Tribal Research Institute, Assam, had so far conducted 10 (ten) Tribal Orientation Training Courses for Officers of the various Development Departments working in the tribal areas of Assam both hills and plains. Altogether 364 Officers had participated in these training courses.

2. The Tribal Research Institute, Assam, had also conducted an Orientation Training-cum-Workshop for the newly recruited Sub-Divisional Welfare Officers in January'85 which was participated by 23 Officers.

3. Orientation Training-cum-Workshop for Development Officers of the Assam Scheduled Castes Development Corporation Ltd. from 2nd to 4th February'68 where 20 Development Officers participated.

4. Orientation Training Course for Tribal Youths conducted at Kopili Development Block, Barapujia (Nagaon), from 5th to 8th May'86 where 29 youths participated.

5. Orientation Training Course for tribal youths at Udalguri Development Block, Udalguri (Darrang), from 8th to 11th July'86 where 30 youth participated.

6. Orientation Training Course for tribal youths held at Lumbejong Development Block, Manja (Karbi Anglong District), from 14th to 17th September'86, where 27 youths participated.

It has been proposed to organise more and more special training courses for Officers posted in tribal areas in pursuance of the instructions from the Department of Personnel and Training, Govt. of India.

Seminar

A. Already held

1. Contribution of Assam Tribes to the Cultural Heritage of Assam and India and their socio-economic problems held at Boko in April 1981.

2. National seminar on 'Alienation of Tribal Land and Tribal Indebtedness' at Guwahati from March 7 to March 9, 1984 where scholars and administrators from 8 (eight)-states participated.

3. A state level Seminar on 'Various Aspects of Socio-cultural Development of the Plains Tribes of Assam' held at Jalah in Barpeta District from 27th to 29th April'85.

4. A state level Seminar was held at Dudhnoi from 11th to 13th August'86 on the subject of 'Problems of Poverty among the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes of Assam and Anti-poverty programmes' where distinguished scholars and administrators numbering 40 from within and outside Assam had participated in addition to local scholars.

Publications

A. Already published

1. Chomangkan—The Death Ceremony Observed by the Karbis. By : B. N. Bordoloi.

2. The Dimasa Kacharis of Assam, (2nd Edition). By : B. N. Bordoloi.

3. The Lalungs (Tiwas). By : G. C. Sharma Thakur.

4. The Boro-Kacharis of Assam—a booklet. By : M. C. Saikia, prepared for exhibition for National Museum of Man at Bhopal.

5. 1st, 2nd and 3rd Issues of Research Bulletin.

6. Alienation of Tribal Land and Indebtedness. By : B. N. Bordoloi.

B. In press

1. The Tribes of Assam (Popular series, Pt-I)
2. 4th Issue of Research Bulletin.

Exhibition

A. Already Participated

| Place | Occasion | Duration |
|---------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Dispur | Adimjati Sanmillan | 6.11.78 to 10.11.78 (5 days) |
| 2. Soalkuchi | Annual Conference of Assam Sahitya Sabha | 9.2.79 to 13.2.79 (5 days) |
| 3. Kokrajhar | Industrial Exhibition | September'83 |
| 4. Gossaigaon | Bodo Sahitya Sabha | 6.4.84 to 8.4.84 (3 days) |
| 5. Sibsagar | 'Assam 85' | 28.1.85 to 10.2.85 (11 days) |
| 6. Guwahati | The National Handloom Expe'85 | 27.2.85 to 24.3.85 (26 days) |
| 7. Boko | Annual Conference of Bodo Sahitya Sabha | 3.4.85 to 6.4.85 (4 days) |
| 8. Kampur | Annual Session of Assam Sahitya Sabha | 28.2.16 to 23.2.86 (3 days) |
| 9. Salbari | Annual Session of Bodo Sahitya Sabha | 4.4.86 to 6.4.86 (3 days) |
| 10. Guwahati | Assam'86 | 24.12.86 to 31.12.86 (8 days) |

Assam T.R.I. is also participating in the Exhibition organised by the National Museum of Man at Bhopal be constructing a Bodo-Kachari hutment and showing their material culture.

Museum

Assam T.R.I. has already started a Museum wherein rare tribal artifacts of different tribal ethnic groups inhabiting Assam hills and plains are proposed to be preserved as well to be displayed. A good number of rare artifacts belonging to Bodo-Kacharis, Mishings, Rabhas, Deoris, Sonowal Kacharis, Lalungs, Karbis, Dimasa Kacharis, Rengma Nagas, Zemi Nagas, Hmare and the Kukis have already been collected. Steps for further improvement of the Museum have also been initiated.

Library

A good beginning has already been made for having a library for the Tribal Research Institute, Assam. Important books numbering about 3500 have already been collected.

Building Complex

At present the Directorate of T. R. I. is housed in two rented buildings. Steps for construction of its own building complex at Jawahar Nagar thorough P.W.D. (Building) are afoot.

The proposed building complex which will be a multistoreyed one, will have the administrative, museum, library and training wings.

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