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The Language problem among the tribes of Tripura :

An Overview

*Dr Pradeep Kumar Deepak**

Abstract:

This paper attempts to explain language & livelihood problems among the tribal people of Tripura. As we know that there are 19 tribes in Tripura speaking different languages, but the majority of them speak Kok-Borok language. But, it is a matter of great concern that Kok-Borok language has no script of its own and is written in either Bengali or in Roman script. It has remained almost confined to non-literary vocabulary among the Tripuri inhabiting hill-slopes or hillocks. A variant of this dialect is also used as a colloquy among the Reangs, Jamatias and Rupinis. The restricted use of this dialect in the form of non-literary colloquy is due to relatively less number of speakers.

This paper justifies language as one of the main causes of the livelihood problem among the tribes of Tripura. The linguistic dominance can be easily observed in this small state in the field of jobs related to administration, politics, culture or education. The tribal people like Debbarmas, staying in and around Agartala, who have adopted Bengali / English language can get better opportunities to qualify as doctor or any white-coloured jobs ; while the Kok-Borok language find no place in the sphere of livelihood matters.

The influence of Bengali language over the Chakma, Mogh, Halam etc. is increasing rapidly, although the dialect differs in many respects from the former. Due to language, the livelihood problem of the tribal people of Tripura is adversely affected.

Key-words- Language, Kok-Borok, Bengali, influence

This paper attempts to explain the language problem among the tribes of Tripura, which proves to be a major issue as far as their livelihood is concerned. As we know that language plays a very pivotal role in the advancement of our knowledge, belief, faith, worship and all round development of personality. This is why, it is an urgent need of the hour to introspect the lives of the tribal people of this tiny state of Tripura.

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As per the views of W.W.Hunter, "Ethnographically Tripura stands on a borderland. Tripura has a dual society, a Tripuri society in the eastern hills and a Bengali society in the western valley." (A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol VI, pp-480). Scheduled tribes constitute about one third of the total population of the state. Altogether 19 Scheduled tribes are recognised throughout the state, who speak different languages, but the majority of them speak Kok-Borok language. The tribes of Tripura could be divided into 2 major groups:- (1). Ab-original and (2). Immigrants. Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Noatia, Lusai, Uchai, Chaimal, Halams, Kukis, Garos, Mog & Chakmas are placed under Ab-original tribes; while other tribes like Bhil, Munda, Orang, Santhal, Lepcha, Khasi & Bhutias are the immigrant tribes.

It is said that India is a forest of languages. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee rightly defines, "A language is a group/set of words that are produced, by means of sounds pronounced with the organs of speech, used in a particular community, placed independently or used in sentences and used for the expression of thought." Linguistically, the tribes of Tripura can be divided into 3 groups:- (1). Bodo groups, (2). Kuki-Chin groups & (3). Arakan groups. Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Uchai and Noatias are Mongloid tribes and belong to Bodo linguistic group of tribes. Kukis, Lusai and most of the tribes under Halam tribes linguistically belong to Kuki-Chin group and speak in Kuki-chin language. Mog and Chakma fall under Arakan group and speak in Arakan language.

We know that education plays a significant role in human life. Without education, a person is considered as uncivilised and uncultured. According to A.W.B. power, the first political agent of Tripura, "The people were virtually without any education. While the hill people were totally illiterate, the people of the plains were marginally better. There were only two schools in the Raja's territory, one at Agartala known as 'Anglo-Vernacular school, or the Maharaja's school and the other at Kailasahar, which was opened only in 1872." As the matter of fact, it was the able reign of Birchandra Manikya that for the first time elementary education was started for both boys and girls in 1872 A.D. and written laws were also introduced and the domestic slavery was prohibited in 1878 A.D. Under the patronage of Bir Chandra Manikya 'Rajaratnakaram', a well-known historical work was published. During this time, Dinesh Chandra Sen has written 'Vanga Bhasa O Sahitya', the history of Bengali literature.

As a matter of fact, language is an important marker in fastening the ethnic identity. It is a rallying point and an important symbol of group-consciousness and solidarity. A language conflict invariably leads to an ugly political issue. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India has rightly said, "Language should not be a dividing factor, but it should bring us together and each language can help the other languages of India grow through contact and exchange of ideas." Despite Nehru's lofty thoughts, the government did not pay heed to these languages. About 420

languages and dialects of different language families are used in a complex and wide-ranging ethno and socio-linguistic configuration of North East India. This fact confers a certain singularity and distinctness to language-related issues in the region. The ethnic spectra of North-East India encompass the non-tribal population as well as the tribal population belonging to 209 Scheduled tribes of this region. (Samuel, John, 'Language and Nationality in North-East India' in 'Economic & Political Weekly Vol- 28, No-3-4, pp-91-92).

A great writer S. N. Chatterjee observes, "In Tripura, altogether 96 languages have been identified. Of these numerically, Bengali, Tripuri, Reang, Chakma, Jamatia, Hindi, Manipuri are important. Bengali is spoken by 67% of the population of the state and is recognised as official state language. The next important language is Tripuri, spoken by about 17% of the total population of the state."(Chatterjee, S.N., Tripura: A profile, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1984, p-44). This is why, in a pluralistic society of Tripura what is remarkable is not just the numbers and variety of dialects, but that each one of them reflect a distinctively definable community having distinctive traits, traditions, attitudes, beliefs, customs and habits. Sometimes, a combination of the dialects spoken in a homogenous territory having some common characteristic traits develops into a language. A language in conjunction with culture, religion and history is an important component of nationality formation. Its functional and symbolic value has far reaching significance in the transitional continuum from continuity to ethnicity and from ethnicity to formalized nationality.

Empirical study on the basis of historical evidences show that no aboriginal tribal communities of Tripura had their own written script, all being in a form of colloquial expression. So, the rulers of Tripura had to look for a written Language for the sake of administrative works. It is stated that Bengali, the flourishing language of the neighbouring plain land was adopted as the state language of Tripura. (Deb, Dasharath, why Bengali script is needed for writing kok-Borok ?, ICAT, Govt. of Tripura, Agartala, 1995, p-17).

'Dialects' are indeed part and parcel of a language. There can be many dialects within a given language. It might be said that this divergence of dialects was inevitable in earlier times, when communication was remote. Despite this, it is also likewise that one finds similarities between the distinctive characteristics of geographically contiguous dialects or speeches. The dialect of the Tripuris is known as 'Kok-Borok', the literal meaning of which is the language of men. It is one of the Bodo groups of dialects which had originated in the Brahmaputra valley and which was at one time spoken over a wide area in that valley and the adjoining areas of north Bengal as well as east Bengal, forming a solid block in North-eastern India. The dialect belongs to the Sino - Tibetan speech family. But, it is a matter of great concern that Kok-Borok language has no script of its own and is written in either Bengali or in Roman script. We can say that it has remained almost confined to non

-literary vocabulary among the Tripuri inhabiting hill-slopes or hillocks. A variant of this dialect is also used as a colloquy among the Reangs, Jamatias and Rupinis.

If we look at the past history of Tripura, we find that from the earliest days of its growth, Bengali has found a place of honour in the royal court of Tripura. Till the integration of Tripura with the Independent India, Bengali had functioned as the official language of Tripura. It is understood that the kings of Tripura had adopted Bengali as the language of the royal family, by which a new culture among the tribal people could be witnessed. Later on, the tribal people of Tripura started to speak in Bengali instead of their mother tongue Kok-Borok. They seemed to be engaged in other Bengali culture pursuits like literature, dance, music, rites and rituals etc.

History is the evidence of this fact that Kok-Borok, a Tibeto- Burmese speech of Tripura was a majority language of the tribal population of the state prior to merger of Tripura with India after independence. At present, we find that of the total population of Tripura, the Kok-Borok speaking tribal communities occupy the majority. Out of 19 tribal communities of the tribal population of the state, 8 communities viz. Tripuri, Reang, Noatia, Jamatia, Rupini, Koloi, Uchoi and Murasing speak in Kok-Borok. Apart from the Kok-Borok speaking tribal communities, other minor tribal communities of this state use Kok-Borok language as the medium of communication amongst the tribal communities each other. In the recent past, the Halam communities call the language of Kok-Borok as 'Rajani-Kok' or 'language of the kings'. Kok-Borok language is the sister language of Boro, Dimasa, Garo etc. As such, there is no doubt about the oldness of this language.

Significance of Kok- Borok Language & literature :

We find that out of the total tribal population of Tripura, the Kok-Borok speaking tribal communities occupy the majority. According to the census of 1991, the tribal population in the State stood 8, 53,345 out of 27, 57,205 being the total population of the State. Out of the total tribal population, the Kok-Borok speaking tribal population comprising the above mentioned eight communities is presumed to be about seven lakhs.

At present, we can assess that Kok-Borok language has been recognised as a language of literature. Therefore, it deserves a language of lively amplitude and distinctive originality. The linguists are of the view that if the modern method of the Linguistics is followed, then the development of this language is certain.

We find that the first Kok-Borok magazine was published in the mid of fifties. From the seventies, there is a continuity of development process and activities in creating Kok-Borok literature. Though, there is still dispute in matter of Kok-Borok script and spelling method, the number of publication of Kok-Borok books on poems, short stories, novel, drama and books of translation are gradually increasing and has taken an important position.

The State Government of Tripura has recognised Kok-Borok as one of the official languages of the state in 1979 A.D. The important Govt. notifications, publicity booklets etc. are being published in the Kok-Borok language along with Bengali. The Kok-Borok language was introduced as a medium of instruction for the Kok-Borok speaking students at the primary stage about twenty years back and it has now been extended up to degree level classes.

The development of Kok-Borok Language & literature

- ❑ It is stated that Radhamohan Thakur has written the Grammar of Kok-Borok named as 'Kok-Borokma,' which was published in 1900 A. D.
- ❑ Traipur Kothamala ,the Kok-Borok-Bengali-English translation book has also been written by Radhamohan Thakur and was published t in 1906.
- ❑ 'KOK-BOKMA', the Kok-Borok grammar book was written in 1897 A. D. Jointly by two authors named as Daulot Ahmed and Md. Omar.
- ❑ The first Kok-Borok Magazine "Kwtal Kothoma" was first edited and published in 1954 by Sudhanwa Deb Barma, who was one of the founder of the Tripura Janasiksha Samiti, and a social worker and a political personality of the State.
- ❑ Sudhir Krishna Deb Barma had written two Kok-Borok Books named as 'Koktang' and 'Surungma Yakhili', which were published in 1954 and 1962 respectively.
- ❑ Kok-Borok Dictionary named as 'Kokrobam' was written by Ajit Bandhu Deb Barma, which was published by the Education Directorate in 1967.
- ❑ The Kok-Borok text Book for children 'Cherai Surungma (Bagsa)'was published by the Education Directorate in 1958,which was written by Mahendra Deb Barma.
- ❑ A number of Kok-Borok and Bengali Magazines were patronizing the thoughts and aspirations of the tribal people. Some of those were -
 - I. Kogtun, edited by Ajoy Deb Barma and Surjya Reang,
 - II. Chini Kok, edited by Ajoy Deb Barma & subsequently by Nirmal Deb Barma
 - III. Tripura Kogtun, a Kok-Borok mouthpiece of the Information Cultural Affairs and Tourism Department of the Government of Tripura, edited by Shyamlal Deb Barma
 - IV. Yapri, edited by Narendra Deb Barma of Kok-Borok and tribal culture, One - "Tripura kok-Borok Unnayan Parisad" was established under the Chairmanship of Bir Chandra Deb Barma in 1967.
- ❑ Tripura Kok-Borok Sahitya Sabha was founded by Sailendralal Tripura, which organised regular discussion on the kok-Borok development and tribal culture through Annual conference, Seminars etc.

Problems faced by the Kok-Borok people in terms of livelihood:

The tribal people of Tripura, who come under the category of 'Scheduled tribes' in terms of the provision of the Constitution of India are facing a lot of problems in terms of livelihood, because their Kok-Borok language is not sufficient for providing them the opportunities in job market. This is why, We observe that the HDI (Human Development Indices) of tribal population is quite low as compared to the rest of the population of the state. This is also mainly because they live in clusters generally in far flung areas, which are remote or in the vicinity of forests and consequently enjoy an effective isolation from the main stream of the country. Their more or less isolated life prevents them from exploiting many advantages of modern civilization. The development programme meant for the general public often elude the tribal population for the reasons of inaccessibility and difficult terrain. K.S.Singh has rightly pointed out, "The tribals are dispossessed of their land, forest, trade and commerce and finally of their culture of which language and dialect are vital modes, unlike the inhabitants of any other North- Eastern state the original of Tripura, both tribals and non-tribals have been submerged by the growing mass of the non-tribals, neutralising the process of acculturation. (Singh,K.S., Ethnicity,Identity and Development, The Fourth Verrier Elwin Lecture, 1985, Shillong, Maohar,New Delhi, pp- 23-27).

Nevertheless the Government of India and the State Governments have taken a number of measures over the years to improve the conditions of STs and for their development. But a lot more needs to be done. The linguistic dominance can be easily observed in this small state in the field of jobs related to administration, politics, culture or education. The tribal people like Debbarmas ,staying in and around Agartala, who have adopted Bengali / English language can get better opportunities to qualify as doctor or any white-coloured jobs ; while the Kok-Borok language finds no place in the sphere of livelihood matters.

At this juncture, I intend to state that simply recognising 'Kok-Borok' language as one of the official languages of this state will not be sufficient for the welfare of the tribal people of Tripura. This language must be made a 'language of livelihood' for the tribal people; only then it will pave their future. On the contrary, it will be simply a language of the library.

Strategies to be focussed on vocationalisation of Kok-Borok language:

Article '46' of the Constitution of India states, "The state shall promote with special care the education 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 injustices and all forms of social exploitation."

This is why, it is the great need of the hour that we should look into the matters of the tribal people of this state. A lot of Government policies have been made to upgrade their status by means of providing them ample scholarships and reserva-

tions of the seats in the employment. But, who takes the benefit of these welfare measures? Generally, among the tribal people, the persons who are from affluent families and receive their education in a reputed institutions in English/ Bengali medium. Therefore, Kok-Borok language must be given due preference in the matters of vocationalisation. I mean to say that from the high school onwards the students must be imparted the vocational training along with their normal studies.

The tribal people, who dwell in the far flung remote hilly areas, are mostly deprived of the essential requirements of normal human beings. Such as: - food, shelter, clothing, health, education etc. If we want that they should also lead a comfortable life, then we must think of their real problems in a practical manner as Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation had always insisted that India would become truly independent only when the poorest of its people would be free from sufferings. How to feed their stomach?- is a burning question in front of them. Therefore, the tribals of the hilly and dense forest areas should be well-trained in acquiring their means of living, i.e., 'the livelihood skills' in a better manner.

Suggestions to improve the socio-economic condition of the tribal people:

- ❑ Though Tripura ranks first in the literacy rate as per the latest statistical data, but still the socio- economic condition of the tribal people inside dense forest and in the remote hilly areas is pathetic. The followings are the suggestion to improve their socio-economic condition:-
- ❑ The Government should start English medium schools in the remote tribal villages in order to provide the tribal students a lot of opportunities in terms of job.
- ❑ The teacher- student ratio should be maintained in a proper manner for quality education.
- ❑ In- service training for teachers should be started to improve the quality of education.
- ❑ Model residential schools should be started in each block, where the poor rural S.T. students should be imparted free and compulsory education like their urban fellows.
- ❑ The small scale industries should be started in the tribal areas.
- ❑ The students should be imparted vocational training such as the bamboo- work, embroidery etc.
- ❑ The proper education of the information technology should be imparted to the rural S.T. students from the high school onwards.
- ❑ Government English medium colleges should be opened to provide the tribal students a lot of opportunities in the higher education.

- At the same time they must be imparted the education of Kok-Borok language to retain their rich cultural heritage and eternal tradition.

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Voluntary Action and Alternative Development of Tribes: **Contemporary Debates**

*DR. Devajana Chinnappa Nanjunda**

Abstract:

Since Independence India has made a significant progress in various sectors of tribal development. The thrust of Tribal development programmes has been to make a frontal attack on poverty through special employment generation programmes, productive asset transfer through institutional credit and subsidy programmes and programmes of Tribal housing, drinking water and sanitation taking NGOs as its main implement partner. Strong thrust has been given to social security programmes for providing assistance to the destitute and poor families. Assistance and encouragement to voluntary agencies and training of functionaries of Tribal development forms part of the emphasis on accelerated Tribal development. Any strategy for Tribal development must involve the people themselves and their institutions at all levels. The main aim of the paper is to review the pros and cons of the NGOs role in the various tribal development issues and this paper is based on the review of the various current literatures and it is concluded that Government-NGOs collaboration must be based on faith and moreover partnership in development.

Background:

Tribal Development Ministry (Govt. of India) in its website says "The prime objective of public cooperation is to enhance the reach of welfare schemes of Government and fill the gaps in service deficient tribal areas in sectors such as education, health, sanitation, drinking water, agro-horticultural productivity, social security, etc., through the efforts of Non - Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and to provide an environment for socio economic upliftment and overall development of the Scheduled Tribes (STs). Any other innovative activity having direct impact on the socio economic development or livelihood generation of STs may also be taken up through partnership with VOs/NGOs. While the ultimate objective is delivery of services to remote and unreached tribal areas, the standard of services provided is equally important".

Over the last decade many international NGOs have planned long term goal of providing a compressive developmental programme to the Tribal people, increas-

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ingly emphasized the more immediate need to provide essential basic infrastructures through scientific management of Tribal's traditional system by conducting more studies on culturally bounded development behavior among various Tribal settings.. As for as organic linkage with the Tribal development schemes are concerned, there is no basic service for a compressive development attempt to understand development culture as a sub culture complex in developing a model of culturally suited developmental programmes specially for the Tribal people of the country having different castes and class. The vital aim scheme should be to to understand how different forces and approaches of local NGOs and Govts have been succeed in the larger socio-economic conditions of the Tribal people and to explore the pattern of development behavior of Tribal people for these programmes(Baiju, 2011).

Despite the formation of specific polices and projects for dealing with Tribal poverty, and the implementation of a large number of programmes by the Government and NGOs in pursuance of these policies, the impact on Tribal poverty in the country has not been minimal. The basic reason for the failure of many programmes is that they are simply not designed to do so. Experts feel All programmes, which will be implemented by the NGOs, should be geographically and culturally specific porgrammes

Environmental degradation, over population, illiteracy, malnutrition, unemployment and low per capita income is the main drawbacks for the tribal development in India. Indian economy is mainly based on farming, which is mixed and subsistent in nature. The farming systems are very poor resource based and cannot satisfy the need of the nation with present level of technology. For organizing the resource poor farming systems for higher productivity the integration of existing enterprises like crop, livestock, fisheries, agro-forestry, off farm and non-farm activities need to be promoted in a holistic way. These activities will be enhanced towards desirable direction for improving quality of the Tribal community if the human resources are properly developed through functional education, training and exposure to need based technology. Therefore, it is essentially important to NGOs to literate and educate the tribal people to enable them actively participate in the developing activities of farming and Tribal systems in an integrated manner through raising productivity of land and man, protecting environment and eliminating the vicious circle of poverty for constructing better society for decent livelihood systems of the Tribes

Approaches to Tribal Development

There are mainly three approaches to Tribal development: (1) The 'transformation' approach, (2) the 'improvement' approach and (3) the 'Tribal socialism' approach. Where the societal goal is outright industrialization, the accompanying Tribal sector policies might be termed as 'transformation strategy'. This emphasizes physical infrastructure and modernization of agriculture. The 'reformist' or 'improvement'

approach aims at working with presents in existing communities in a framework of co-operation. The policy measures for this strategy may include land reforms, farm credit, cash crop development, agricultural extension, marketing co-operatives, local associations etc. It basically intends to reconcile the needs of modern high volume marketing with the economics of traditional farm land of tribes.

The fundamental criticism leveled against tribal development programme is that it has failed to arouse the enthusiasm of the people. However, the programme was useful. To quote Mishra "despite all the defects of the Integrated Tribal Development Programmes (IRDP) and its largely bureaucratic character, there did indeed take place considerable development of the countryside, at least in terms of laying out a vast infrastructure of welfare services, cooperatives and voluntary organizations, what is more, that period was also characterized by as significant transfer of resources from urban to Tribal areas which to no small extent contributed to a steady relationship between the two sectors. This was also the period when political power shifted to Tribal areas, thanks largely to electoral process and the permeation of competitive politics, and gave rise to substantial articulation of Tribal needs and interests even-though this still left out the very poor and the underprivileged" (Mishra, 2001).

Tribal Poverty has long been both an economic and social problem in our country. India has one third of the total population of the world living under poverty line. Numerous NGOs have been working towards find a solution to the Tribal poverty problem. According to the latest ILO report, more than 0.5 million tribal children are working in different corners of India because of poverty. Many NGOs have grown in size and capabilities conducting research and training's while developing effective and innovative programmes to shift children from work to school. The work of NGOs in the fields of primary education, micro-financing, and alternative income generation programmes have also made important contribution in the effort to eradicate Tribal poverty in both urban and Tribal India. However, unless NGOs make significant improvement in their performance in promoting sustainable livelihood for the poor their best efforts may not prove sufficient for ending Tribal poverty.

Although at policy level NGOs have been perceived as developmental agents, yet the scene at the grassroots level is not always in consonance with this subjectivity. It is so because base level Government functionaries some time see NGOs workers as outside encroaching/ occupying their space. And on other side few NGOs thinks different Government agencies are the main hurdles in their way. This may be the major weakness of many NGOs Their mutual interactions and even collaboration makes the effort more effective This NGO Corporation with the Government in current years has given highly encouraging outcome as well as

contradictions also. Because of such corporation more proactive policies from the Government has emerged in the recent years. However Few NGOs have misused this strategy, Hence at some cases overturn has happening with the Government policies daunting the participation of NGOs in Tribal sector.

Here both Government and voluntary agencies should change their attitude and should be complimentary to each other and must take confidence in each other. The NGOs should make lot of homework in making people's participation in educating and training to improve their of professional skills, overcoming behavior and cultural resistance of communities may be preferably involved in tackling the problem of Tribal poverty and always they should try to became closer to the local people. Many NGOs believe economic compulsion is not only the reason for Tribal poverty. Hence all NGOs must think in the way of giving more and more low cost job oriented education and their by encouraging more women joining the work force besides empowerment of women would go a long way in elimination of Tribal poverty (Kailas, 2004).

NGOs exclusively focus on Tribal poverty related issues. If these kinds of NGOs could succeed in promoting sustainable livelihood for the poor, so that they can develop requisite level of expertise in Tribal poverty related sub sectors. And NGOs must think of much larger scale projects and draw financial and human resource from the mainstream. polices and projects should adopt a holistic approach, taking in to the consideration socio economic set-up of working area. They should also enter into collaborative relationships with Government agencies and other NGOs. NGOs try hard to solve grass-root level of problem and they should think in upgrading of living standards and education status more particularly of the women and child. More than this, NGOs should learn in employment generation in non-agricultural sectors will go a long in curbing the demand and supply of Tribal poverty.

Conclusion:

Tribal development policy and its impact on changes on the tribes is the time to examine the main contemporary concerns of Tribal development policy keeping one side the role of NGOs.. Because of Government can't alone do everything? However, rather than take a technocratic approach to policy, it is needed to especially concern with developing the tools for a critical role of NGOs - Government partnership based on local demand. Policy statements often disguise the real intentions of intervention of voluntary agencies.. Analysis of outcomes regularly misses unintended consequences and the achievement of unstated goals of this partnerships. Hence social scientists feel to examine the relationship between public action 'from below' and the national level policy process towards the involvement of NGOs. it is generally believed that 'participatory' and 'decentralized' approaches to local and regional policy making are also (critically) should be take into account.

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"Traditional Practices and Knowledge of Tribals: Issues to be discussed in Development Domain"

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Key Words:

(Traditional Knowledge, Tribal Society, Traditional Practices, Forest and Livelihood of tribal people, Ecology and Economic Development of Tribals)

Abstract:

This paper tries to explore the possibilities of preservation of traditional knowledge of the Indian tribal's with specific reference to tribals of eastern India. As their life and livelihood in concentrating on local ecology, nature, culture, day to day practices, hence it is important to preserve their traditional knowledge domain and to promote it, so that the larger society can harness the benefit of it. In this context what are causes of gradual extinction of traditional practices and as a result of it, its consequences on the society- flora, fauna and human beings and animals. It is crucial that we must identify those practices, problems arising out of it and what are possible solutions to those problems. In this context, the author tries to explore the possibilities to increase the role of government and civil society to preserve the traditional knowledge and people's participation in tribal development policy and activities.

Introduction: What are traditional Practices?

The tribal's are the only people who still follow their tradition and practices as well as wisdom. They are the only people who still conserve medicinal plants, they are the only people who still use indigenous variety of seeds along with hybrid variety. There are sacred groves in almost all tribal villages under which they place their deities and they are the people who still worship nature. This is the method how they conserve biodiversity through their day to day practice. The tribal's fully depend on forest for their livelihood but they do not cause much harm to forest. These are some practices of the tribal's which should be conserved and the plants used by the tribal's as medicine should be patented so that the tribal's could get some benefit out of it. The local varieties of rice are used by the tribal's to perform

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some important rituals, knowingly or unknowingly they conserve the local variety of rice which is very rarely found in this modern world. Hence more stress should be given to conserve these traditional practices, lest it would be a great loss to the future generation. However in recent times due to number of so called development activities, traditional knowledge and practices are gradually becoming extinct.

There are a number of benefits that can be harnessed from nature, to which the modern society is not aware of. The aboriginals are the only people who can give us more ideas on utility of nature. They depend solely on nature and take all care for the protection and conservation of nature. Aboriginal people have intimately incorporated plants, animals, air, water and soil in their socio-cultural perspective. As a result of which it has become a tradition of passing their knowledge from generation to generation with great faith and belief. In this context aboriginal communities living in different parts of the globe are consulted to record their knowledge about the plants used as medicine to cure various diseases, about the knowledge of food security, about the knowledge of conservation of plants, etc. and this lead to the emergent of a new branch of science called 'Traditional knowledge'. Utilization of plants for medicinal purposes in India has been documented long back in ancient literature. The documentation about the use of plants for medicinal purposes has provided information for preparing the drugs. Documentation of medicinal plants used by the aboriginal communities of the different parts of the globe has opened the door to the world of medicinal plants. Indigenous peoples represent living libraries of indigenous knowledge that are being lost as they merge with modern society. Every culture has its own unique tradition, from which they experience a unique traditional knowledge. The documentation of the traditional knowledge will provide a way for the culture to restore their knowledge into itself when it loses its practitioners.

The term traditional knowledge and indigenous knowledge are not same. The knowledge that the indigenous people have and have been practicing it in their day to day life from time immemorial is known as indigenous knowledge; indigenous knowledge is a part of traditional knowledge. The indigenous people are the people who live in remote forest and hill, till today they have retained their tradition and culture. They follow different indigenous practices like their eating habits, their healing habits, their storing habits, mode of cultivating land etc. Till today the indigenous people collect tubers and berries from forest and fill their stomach, they even preserve these tubers and take them during lean period. They too have their own water harvesting technique, irrigation channels, bridges in hills, utilization of forest species like herbs, shrubs for medicinal purposes, meteorological assessment etc. Such invaluable knowledge of theirs needs to be properly documented and preserved lest it should get lost in the wake of modernization and passage of time.

Tribal People of India and their Indigenous Practices:

In the Context of India, it is always found that the tribal or the ab-original people are the custodian of traditional wisdom, which has been inherited from generation to generation by various practices, who are known as tribal people. Scheduled Tribes are known for their knowledge and wisdom of ethnic origin. There is, however, no legal and/or institutional framework to safeguard their intellectual property rights. The National Policy, therefore, will aim at making legal and institutional arrangements to protect their intellectual property rights. Some villages in tribal district still have grain bank and seed bank to store grain and seed. They store grain and take it during lean period. They still follow the traditional system of healing. Biodiversity is a vast area, there are different types of biodiversities in our country i.e. plant biodiversity, animal biodiversity, marine biodiversity etc, but all these biodiversities are disappearing gradually but the tribal's are the people who conserve these biodiversities through their practice, i.e. in the form of sacred groove. We can find a sacred groove in almost every tribal village.

According to Constitution under Article 342 Scheduled Tribes are those, who have primitive traits, distinctive culture, shyness with the public at large, geographical isolation and social and economic backwardness before notifying them as a Scheduled Tribe. There are about 67.8 million Scheduled Tribe people which constitute 8.08 per cent of India's population. There are 698 Scheduled Tribes spreading all over the country. Tribal depend on forest particularly plants or plant parts to meet the demands of their basic need. They collect many kinds of food plants like bulbs, culms, rhizomes, tubers, dried fruits, leaves etc. and use it during lean period. Similarly tribal people collect non-timber forest products (NTFP) from the forest and sell them in daily market to support their economic standard. They also use plant parts to build their houses and different house hold items. Since the tribal have been staying for a long period in the lap of nature, they know the various uses of plant parts to cure different diseases. The person who gives medicine is known as Dishari (local healer, preacher or traditional practitioner related to health and well being of a tribal person). Some Dishari have their own gurus (leader or teacher) and some have gained knowledge from their previous generation. Being secretive they never transfer the knowledge to other people. Usually the tribal people never rely on modern medicine to cure diseases, rather they continue to believe and practise their traditional methods of curing diseases by using medicinal plants. The medicinal plants were collected from the forest, sun dried and used as drugs.

An interesting example of traditional practice followed by a tribal group in India is the medicinal practice followed by Godaba tribe, which is one of the most primitive tribe, available in many parts of India, particularly states of central and eastern India. They are available in Odisha in a significant manner. The Godabas use mostly above-ground plant parts than the under-ground parts of plant. Both the

above and under- ground parts of three plants are used as medicine, they are namely *Argemone Mexicana*, *Nerium coronarium* and *Gossypium hirsutum*. Some weeds like *Argemone mexicana*, *Cassia occidentalis*, *Ageratum conyzoides* and *Elephantopus scaber* are used as medicinal plants by the Godabas.

From the above- ground parts, leaf and fruit are most commonly used parts than other parts of the plant body. Majority of the plants used for the purpose of medicine by the Godabas were herbs, followed by trees and shrubs. There are a number of economic plants used by the Godaba tribe to cure various diseases which need conservation. The utilization of these medicinal plants used by the Godabas have to be recorded, it was also found that the Godabas also conserve these plants in kitchen gardens. Hence the conservation practice should also be adopted to meet the demands of medicinal plants. The Godabas are always self- sufficient and self-reliant and have been developing their own medicines from centuries. They depend on plant and plant product to prepare their medicines. They have their own method of identifying and curing diseases. They believe in natural and spiritual powers to cure diseases.

Experience from Other Countries:

It has been observed that Orang Asli in Kampung Bawong, Perak, West Malaysia use some common plants to cure diseases. Most of these plants were used to relieve pain and to cure wound. Certain plants have specific use such as *Strobilanthes crispus* Blume, used to enhance the immune system and roots of *Eurycoma longifolia* Jack., used as aphrodisiac. The results of this study showed that majority of the Orang Asli, of Kampung Bawong are still dependent on local plants as their primary source of medication.

Communities in Ethiopia highly value *Hagenia abyssinica* for its medicinal properties. Though all parts of this medicinal plant are important to local communities, the most frequently used and mentioned part are the flowers, which carry anthelmintic properties and used against intestinal parasites (e.g. tapeworms). *Hagenia* is also used as veterinary medicine against many livestock ailments. Traditional medicines are presently used by nearly 80% of the population of African Region. Hence, traditional knowledge is increasingly becoming a source of modern drug. Despite the important role of traditional knowledge, traditional communities are unable to protect their knowledge through the existing intellectual property system owing to the failure of the knowledge to satisfy the requirements for intellectual property protection. Protection and utilization of traditional knowledge for the benefit of the knowledge holders and society is very important.

Policy Dimension:

To assemble the tribal's among the main stream of society and to conserve the traditional knowledge of the tribal's, Government seeks to promote some policies

called national policy. The National Policy recognizes that a majority of Scheduled Tribes continue to live below the poverty line, have poor literacy rates, suffer from malnutrition and disease and are vulnerable to displacement. It also acknowledges that Scheduled Tribes in general are repositories of indigenous knowledge and wisdom in certain aspects. In terms of Policy dimensions, in the post- independent period, Nehru's Panchsheel on tribal policy (five basic principles in which tribal autonomy, independence, cultural uniqueness would remain intact, without disturbing them, and integrating them to the mainstream was the major focus), Bhuria commission report, Dhever commission report and B.D. Sharma's number of reports on tribal problems of India, Elwin Varriers' work on Tribal's of central India, will give us a broad picture about the ongoing process of development, industrialization process related to it, economic transformation of society, social changes and cultural lag- how these are affecting tribal society today. How it is leading towards gradual alienation, deprivation from means of production, and more protest- might be armed struggle, bloodshed and ultimately secessionist movements and the state look at them as anti-national in their home land. They are primarily becoming developmental refugees. The tragedy is that they are becoming refugees in their own homeland.

The national policies which have been made to preserve and impart traditional knowledge are:

- ❑ Preserving and promoting traditional knowledge and wisdom and document it
- ❑ Establish a centre to train tribal youth in areas of traditional wisdom
- ❑ Disseminate such through models and exhibits at appropriate places
- ❑ Transfer such knowledge to non-tribal areas

Convention on Biological Diversity also deals with issues like conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge Sharing, in a fair and equitable way, the results of research and development and the benefits arising from the commercial and other utilization of genetic resources with the Contracting Party providing such resources (governments and/or local communities that provided the traditional knowledge or biodiversity resources utilized), transfer of technology, including biotechnology to the government or local communities that provided traditional knowledge or biodiversity resources, education and public awareness, provision of financial resources, impact assessment. In this context it is pertinent to look at the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People-2007.

Development Activities and Loss of Traditional Practices:

If we will examine the present models of development, modernization and industrialization process, it is going against the tribal people. In number of cases, they are getting displaced, rehabilitation is not proper and they losing their liveli-

hoods, destruction of habitat, culture and community life. The stories from Bhakra Nangal dam, Hirakud Dam, Rourkela Steel Plant, Tata Steel Plant at Jamshedpur, Bakora Steel Plant and Durgapur steel plant are heartbreaking for an ordinary citizen of the country. There are number of examples in the similar fashion. Even the so called urbanization process compelling the tribal to move towards peripheral, where as they are already in margin of the development process. Similarly the right over forest resources and the clash between forest right act vs. tribal rights act and in this context the famous Janu case in Kerala is a classic example. Similarly the story of prolonged fight of the tribals at Niyamgiri movement in Odisha against mega industrial power named 'VEDANTA'. Their gram sabha out rightly rejected the passing of industry set up bill at village level. The same is also with POSCO movement in Odisha, Kashipur movement against Sterilite Alumina plant in Odisha.

The Integrated Approach for Tribal Development:

It is found that in many areas, the welfare activities undertaken there are looked upon by the general tribal population with great suspicion. The tribal leaders have been very critical of social workers in whom they find political competitors. With the emergence of new tribal consciousness, and tribal wings of political parties or parties supporting genuine tribal development, the Government as well as social workers are becoming g conscious of their expected paternal attitude towards the tribal population. And now trying through half heartedly skill, to take the applied anthropologists and the tribal leaders into closer collaboration in the planning and implementation of tribal welfare schemes. In fact such collaboration was forged in 1953, when social scientists, welfare workers, tribal leaders of the Congress party and Government officials met at a conference held at Lohargoda (Bihar) and discussed the line of action for the upliftment of tribal population.

The area development approach was examined in detail by various planners, anthropologist, sociologist, rural development expert etc. Prof. Roy Burman is of the opinion that the Different tribal villagers are in network of relationship and thus form an area. Hence this should not be ignored. Prof. Roy Burman and Prof. Vidyarthi hold an identical view that the improvement of their condition of life ultimately depends upon the development of the area economically and socially. It is pertinent to summarize the principal deficiencies of the earlier plans as follows:

1. Neglect and lack of special attention to tribal and scheduled areas in spite of constitutional provisions,
2. Poor and inadequate allotment of funds in both general and special sectors to cover all aspects of development o tribal areas.
3. Tribal development blocks too small a unit of development for over all development.
4. Inadequate administrative machinery.

5. Lack of effective personnel policy.
6. Lack of reliance on the part of the Government on local anthropology of the folk.
7. Excess politicization of the tribal areas.

Hence the approach must be to achieve integrated development for the tribal areas. Larger tribal development areas by grouping tribal development blocks and other areas are important. Small pockets of tribal communities should be separately taken off. A combination of ecological, occupational, and social parameters should be properly assessed and taken into consideration in policy formulation and implementation of programmes to ensure steady flow of benefits to the tribals. In that case, not only tribal people ecology and live livelihood will be protected and they won't be displaced or mistrust/ suspect the development activities, rather we can win their trust and confidence.

Conclusion:

Though governments have made different policies to conserve traditional knowledge but more care has to be taken to unveil and conserve different indigenous knowledge lest it will be lost and the future generation will be the worst sufferer. For example, previously Orissa in India had a number of indigenous varieties of rice but with modernization people have started using hybrid variety of rice, as a result of which, most of the indigenous variety of rice have disappeared. The same is the case with medicinal plants, earlier people were using traditional medicine hence they were conserving medicinal plants but with the upcoming of modern medicine, most the medicinal plant are in the state of extinction. Earlier villages had seed bank as a result of which the indigenous variety of seeds were preserved but with modernization there are almost no or very few seed bank as a result of which the indigenous varieties of seeds are in the verge of extinction and the hybrid variety of seeds are mostly available in the market.

On the name of industrialization, where market economy determines everything, hardly there is concern for the life, economy, ecology and livelihood of the tribals. Sometimes it is perceived as not only second class citizens but also secondary citizens of the country. Are the industrial houses getting clearance from the tribal's panchayat's genuinely or in fraudulent manner? What is the proper mechanism to get the approval of tribal people? What about the Environment/ Social Impact Assessment? The law of the land- our constitution and subsequent amendments like PESA specifically mentions about the procedure to be adopted in the context of tribal governance. How clearance can be obtained from the people through 'Gram Sabha' at village or hamlet level. What are the mechanisms to preserve the traditional knowledge at local level with the cooperation and involvement of tribal people. Rather than destructing their habitat, community life and dependence upon nature and ecology, why not protect and preserve the system which is sustainable and helpful to the community in the long run.

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DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON VILLAGE COUNCIL AND TRADITIONAL LOCAL SELF-GOVERNING SYSTEM

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Abstract:

Decentralization a widely used concept is defined as the process of devolution of power and authority from a political or administrative centre to local levels which ensures grassroots level people's participation in decision making process. Decentralization enhances the democratic voice of the people, making the community level as an entry point which would increase the opportunities for citizens to take interest in public affairs and participate in decision making. The present study examines the dimension of the decentralization process in rural administration in West Garo Hills District in Meghalaya as compared to Lawngtlai District in Mizoram. Both West Garo Hills District and Lawngtlai Districts falls under the Sixth Scheduled of the Constitution of India having their own Autonomous District Councils, to safe guard their own traditions and customary laws accordingly. Rural administration in India has been empowered by decentralization after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act giving high importance to the participation of local people at the grassroots level. It is examined that West Garo Hills District has huge dependency on the Traditional local Self-governing system called the 'Nokma System' where most of the decision making is done by the done by the Nokma. Therefore, the present study investigates the functioning level of decentralization process in the Nokma System in West Garo Hills District to see what insights could be gained in understanding the local governing system and if the decentralization is actually applicable in the Nokma System. The study also examines the prospect of building a decentralized rural administration in the Nokma System.

Keywords: Decentralization, Autonomous Councils, Rural Administration, Village Council, Nokma.

INTRODUCTION :

Decentralized Governance can be clearly defined as the process of devolution of power and authority from a political or administrative centre to local levels. Decentralization ensures grassroots level people's participation in decision making process. It is the transfer of planning, decision making or administrative authority from the Central Government to Local Administrative Units. However, the extent to which the Local Governing Bodies can plan, decide and manage may vary depending on the

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power and authority given to them. The principal objectives of decentralization have historically included the promotion of accountability, transparency, efficiency in governance and service delivery, and the empowerment of the masses from the grassroots levels through the promotion of the participation of individuals and communities in their governance.

According to one definition:

"Decentralization, or decentralizing governance, refers to the restructuring or reorganization of authority so that there is a system of co-responsibility between institutions of governance at the central, regional and local levels according to the principle of subsidiarity, thus increasing the overall quality and effectiveness of the system of Governance, while increasing the authority and capacities of sub-national levels."

Decentralization has been defined by various scholars of public administration as transference of authority from a higher level of government to a lower, delegation of decision making, placement of authority with responsibility, allowing greatest number of actions to be taken where most of the people reside, removal of functions from the centre to the periphery, a mode of operations involving wider participation of people in the whole range of decision making beginning from plan formulation to implementation (Rondinelli and Nellis 1986; Rahman 1996).

Decentralization enhances the democratic voice of the people. Making the community level as an entry point which would increase the opportunities for citizens to take interest in public affairs, participate in decision making in order to advocate the strategy of reform and changes in democracy which would lead to transparency, responsiveness, accountability and ensure good governance.

Section -1

VILLAGE COUNCILS UNDER THE SIXTH SCHEDULED AREAS

The tribal community represent an important social category of Indian social structure. The Tribals are said to be the original inhabitants of India. Different types of groups occupy different parts of India, having their own cultural characteristics and levels of development. "Tribes" in the Indian context today are normally referred to in the language of the Constitution as "Scheduled Tribes". The Scheduled Tribe constitute the second largest group of the backward classes that come under what is known as the "Unprivileged Section" of the populace.

Profile of the Scheduled Areas:

There are three main principal groups of tribes in India. At one end we have tribes living in the vastness of the hills cut off from all contact with the outer world, they are found in pockets in South and Central India and in the Andamans. At the other

end we find virile race of freedom-loving, politically conscious Tribals in North-East India. And in-between we see the vast tribal belt which stretches like a girdle across Central India, from Odisha (including Andhra) in the East to Gujarat in the West (BakshiD.Sinha, P.S.K. Menon ; 2003)

The tribal communities are traditionally well-versed in the regulation, control and conduct of their domestic, religious, socio-economic-political and judicial affairs through the combined wisdom of their leaders and the traditions that they have followed as one of their guiding principles in life. Therefore it is important to make them feel included in the mainstream society and as such the government have taken several steps in safeguarding their traditions and customary laws which is an integral part of their social life.

Decentralized Governance in Scheduled Areas:

The enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment was a life changing event for the rural people. In order to make the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment applicable to Scheduled Areas and Tribal areas, a Committee known as The Bhuria Committee was formed. The Bhuria Committee Report made certain suggestions as the 73rd Amendment Act was not automatically applicable to the Scheduled areas because of their unique characteristics and special needs. Subsequently, on the basis of expert advice as contained in the Bhuria Committee, 1995, an Amendment Act was enacted in December 1996 enabling extension of the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, in a modified form to the eight states which have Scheduled areas- Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan. Four states - Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura which have Tribal Areas.

North- East Region under the Sixth Schedule:

The North-Eastern region inhabits about 12 percent of the country's tribal population and this region has been labelled as 'excluded' or 'partially excluded' during the colonial rule. With India's independence, policies of development and integration through a separate Sixth Schedule of the Constitution was enacted which entirely focused on protection of tribal areas and interests by allowing self-governance through constitutional institutions at the district or regional level. These institutions are entrusted with the twin task of protecting tribal cultures and customs and undertaking development tasks.

The original Sixth Schedule areas created in 1952 underwent drastic reorganization in 1971; some areas were put under newly created states such as Mizoram and Meghalaya which were carved out of the composite Assam. At present the Schedule applies in four states only - it almost fully covers Meghalaya and partly the states of Assam, Tripura and Mizoram. Areas and states not covered by Sixth Schedule provisions- Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Manipur - also have laws respecting the autonomy of traditional ways of self-governance and protecting from outside interference.

Following the amendment made in the Constitution for the provisions of Tribal Areas, 'Village Council' was constituted under each Autonomous District Council in accordance with the Constitution so that the Tribals would be able to continue taking care of their own administration without any alterations to their traditions and customary laws. Areas that come under the Sixth Scheduled of the Constitution of India having their own Autonomous District Council will follow the 'Village Council Act' set by its own District Council under the approval of the Governor of the state. Each Autonomous District Council will have their own 'Village Council Act' depending on the customary law and traditions followed in a particular region. The powers and function relate to the fields of legislation, administration of justice, general administration, finance etc of the village Council may vary in each Autonomous District Council.

In order to have a better understanding of 'Village Councils' and 'Traditional Local Self- Governing System' which falls under the Sixth Scheduled, let us take a closer look at Mizoram and Meghalaya. This study is based on Autonomous District Council in Mizoram with special reference to Lai Autonomous District Council in Lawngtlai and a study on Traditional Local Self -Governing system called the 'Nokma System' which is still follow and practice in West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya.

Section-2

VILLAGE COUNCIL IN LAWNGTLAI DISTRICT IN MIZORAM

Profile of Lawngtlai District - Mizoram:

Lawngtlai district is located in the south western most part of Mizoram having international boundaries with Bangladesh to the west and Myanmar to the south. The inhabitants of the district are mainly the ethnic groups of Tribals like Lai and Chakma, who are among the minor tribal communities of Mizoram. The Lai people have their own dialect which is called 'Lai Hawlh' or Lai Language, which is related to the Tibeto - Burman language.

There are two Autonomous District Councils within the District. The two-in-one District comprises the Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) and the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) with their headquarters at Lawngtlai and Kamalanagar respectively. Having separate autonomous legislature, executive and judiciary, the Lai and Chakma administered their respective Autonomous Regions in accordance with the provision of the Sixth Scheduled to the Constitution of India.

Establishment of Village Council under Lai Autonomous District Council:

Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) was constituted on 29 April 1972 under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India in which they could protect their own customs and culture, and develop their own language and ways of living. Therefore, under the Autonomous District Council, in every village a 'Village Council' is formed

under the 'Village Council Act'. Members of the village council may vary depending on the size and population of the village. It is the duty of the village councils to strictly follow the rules and regulations set by the Autonomous District Council. They act as an Intermediary in representing the voice of the village people for the well-being of the society.

Constitution, Election and Term, Executive body of the village council:

Constitution:

There is a Village Council in each village within the jurisdiction of Lai Autonomous District Council. A village council is composed of members according to the numbers of houses specified:

1. For a village having four hundred and above houses, there are seven members, one reserve for women.
2. For a village having less than four hundred houses, there are five members including one seat for women.

Election:

Electing members of the village council is done by people's assembly, who are entitled to vote under any election. Electing members of the village council now take place after every five years. All elected members hold their post during their term.

Executive Body:

To form an executive body, there is a president, vice-president and a secretary in each Village council in which the executive function is vested. The President and Vice-President are elected by members of the Village Council from amongst themselves by a majority of vote. However, appointment of the secretary is done by the Village Council president from the elected members of Village Council.

Power and Functions:

The rules and regulations set by the Executive Committee for the Village Council can only come into act with the approval of the Governor of the state.

Legislative Functions:

- 1) A Village Council have the power to make rules for the normal administration of the village in accordance with the needs of the village.
- 2) The rules made by the Village Council should be done keeping in mind the culture, customs and practices of the village community.
- 3) Rules made by the Village Council have to be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval and until approved by the Executive Committee in its full sitting such rules will not have any effect.

Judicial Functions:

- 1) Every village have a Village Court for the trial of suit and cases falling within the customary laws and practices of the village community.
- 2) Until Rules are made in its behalf by the District Council, the Village Council of a village shall function as the Village Court of that village for the trial of suit and cases between parties all of whom belong to the village.
- 3) Every Village Court have the power to trial thief's and petty crimes in which the punishment may extend to a maximum of Rs.500 (rupees five hundred) only.
- 4) Appeal from a Village Court lies to the Subordinate District Council Court.

Village Council Fund:

There is a Village Council fund for every village council; the fund is called 'Village council Fund'. Any collection authorised by law, other than revenue and taxes made in a village for the good of the people is paid into the said fund. The secretary keeps the fund and the accounts can be opened for inspection as and when any members of the village Council consider it necessary.

Duties of the Village Council:

1. Cleaning of village roads and paths, construction, maintenance and improvement of public wells and tanks.
2. Sanitation and conservancy in the village area and the prevention of public nuisance.
3. Opening of, and regulating, burial and cremation grounds for disposal of dead bodies of human beings, and allocation of places for disposal of dead animals and other offensive matter.
4. Regulating the construction of new building or houses, or the extension or alteration of any such existing ones.
5. Registration of marriage and registration of births and deaths and maintenance of register for the purpose.
6. Supplying local information as and when require to the District Council or the State Government.
7. Measures necessary for the preservation of public health and taking curative and preventive measures in respect of an epidemic.
8. Allotment of a region or area within the boundaries of each village for jhum and subsidiary cultivation for a particular year. The distribution of jhum and subsidiary plots is done in accordance with the laws laid out by the District Council paragraph 3(1) of the Sixth Scheduled of the Constitution of India.

9. Organising collective works in the village. However, under any circumstance a person who is sixty years of age or above shall not be compelled to work and any person below the age of fifteen shall be allowed to represent in the collective work.
10. Creation or maintain of supply reserve for the village. The reserve is accessible for collecting of firewood, materials for construction of houses etc.

For each or any of the above duties, the village council can appoint a separate Committee who will be responsible for implementing its decision.

State Election Commission of Mizoram:

The State Election Commission was constituted in Mizoram on October 3, 2008, under Article 243K and 243ZA of the constitution of India. The Election Commission is an independent, autonomous and constitutional body. The State Election commissioner heads the State Election Commission of Mizoram, it is a body constitutionally empowered to conduct free and fair elections in Mizoram.

The State Election Commission now conducts all the elections i.e., the Municipal Council, Local Council, Members of District Council (For Autonomous Councils), and Village Council. All rules and regulations regarding elections are taken care of by the Election Commission, appointing the Deputy Commissioner as the Returning Officer and under his guidance and supervision the election are now conducted for each district in Mizoram.

Section-3

TRADITIONAL LOCAL SELF-GOVERNING SYSTEM IN WEST GARO HILLS DISTRICT in MEGHALAYA

Profile of West Garo Hills District - Meghalaya:

West Garo Hills District is located in the western most part of Meghalaya having international boundary with Bangladesh on south and north-west. Majority of the inhabitants of the district are the Garos. Other indigenous inhabitants are the Hajongs, Rabhas, Koches and BoroKachari. The Garos, the Hajong and the BoroKachari are listed under the Scheduled Tribe whereas the Rabha and Koch are listed as Other Backward Classes. The Garos have their own dialect which is believed to be one of the Mongoloid tribes speaking dialects of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan speech-family.

Tura is the administrative headquarter of WestGaro Hills District and falls under the Sixth Scheduled of the Constitution of India where they have their own Autonomous District Council. However, unlike the Village Council that is followed in the Autonomous District Council in Lawngtlai, Mizoram, the Garos still followed their 'Traditional Local Self -Governing System' called the 'Nokma System'.

Establishment of Garo Hills Autonomous District Council:

The Garo Hills Autonomous District Council was constituted on February, 1952 under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India in which they could protect their own customary laws and traditions of the land. The Garo Hills Autonomous District Council is composed of 24 members of whom 22 are elected and 2 are nominated for a period of five years. Villages within the jurisdiction of the Autonomous District Council are to constitute a 'Village council' for each village or for a group of villages under the 'Village Council Act'.

The Village Council have been set up in each village to provide for the constitution and development of Local-Self Governing system in Garo Hills. The traditional Local Self-Governing system is still practised in the village under their respective chief called the 'Nokma' to run the internal administration of the village in accordance to the traditions and customary laws followed by the people. A Nokma to be recognised as a Nokma by the whole clan, by the Government and by the District Council have to registered himself under the 'Village council Act' in order to claim his rights as a Nokma for a particular village or area.

The Nokma System:

The Garo called themselves 'A'chick' and to them social customs and traditions is the law of the land, it is the force of law governing the whole Garo tribe. The history of the village life of the Garos was based on the governance of one leader called the 'Nokma' or A'khingNokma for each village. The Garo society follows the matrilineal system, where the youngest daughter inherits the property of the mother and this is a hereditary system which has been handed down from generation to generation. As such, the youngest daughter in the family would be the 'Nokma' for a particular village, her husband for and behalf of his wife would administer all the important functions in the village.

The Nokma have the power and authority to administer the legislative and judicial power within its jurisdiction based on the customary laws and traditions followed by the village people. Members of the Nokma are appointed from the elders of close relatives of the A'khingNokma (Landlord). Every household have to adhere to the rules and regulations framed by the Nokma. If they do not abide by the rules they are either punishable or shall be liable to pay a fine.

Rights and privileges of the A'khingNokma:

Certain traditional rights and privileges endows the A'khingNokma -

1. Performance of Gana ceremony - a ceremony perform by any rich man of the village to give a feast to the entire village, after which he wears an elbow ring which is an emblem of a Nokma. However, this ceremony can only be performed with the consent of the Nokma.

2. Possession of Nagra or a special drum - a special drum only owned by the Nokma.
3. Performance of A'songtata ceremony - a stone is erected at the outskirts of a village to drive away evil spirits and dangers like sickness, animals etc. A sacrifice is offered and it is only the Nokma who can offer such sacrifice.
4. Title to land - the A'khingNokma has his own land where he is the chief or leader of that particular village.

Social and Economic Status:

The A'khingNokma occupies a high place in the society. It is the pivot of the village organisation through which the basic fabric of the entire society is woven. In fact, the Nokma plays the leading role as the central figure in the village activities and externally represents the Village.

The A'khingNokma receives some benefit if an outsider wants to cultivate land within the A'khing land. The person who is cultivating the land has to pay a certain amount to the Nokma, this can be in kind or money. Besides these the Nokma also receives some share from the extraction fee called the Nokma's fee for certain forest products like timber, bamboo, cane, etc.

Duties and Responsibility:

The A'khingNokma is responsible for the peace and good administration within his A'khing land. Decisions on land for jhum cultivation, performing sacrifices and organising festivals are all in the hands of the Nokma. The settlement of disputes is done with the help of the elders of the village in an open court. Therefore, it is the sole responsibility of the Nokma to see to it that all the people in his village are treated equally and enjoy their own civil rights.

Electing a Nokma:

Electing a Nokma is also done by members of the village, if it is not a hereditary system that is followed due to some special reasons. A voice board will be held, with the proposal from members of the locality, the Nokma will be elected with the consent of all the members of the village. He will then represent his village for and behalf of the people in the village.

Members of council:

There are seven members in the Nokma Council, including the Nokma and secretary. Members are generally the elders from the Nokma close relatives. They will act and advise the Nokma as and when necessary to have a better administration in the village.

Council of Nokmas:

To preserve what has always been an integral part of the traditional life of the Garo people, an organisation Called 'Council of Nokmas' was established on 5th march, 1965, with its headquarter in Tura. Council of Nokma is registered under the Society Act and is therefore a recognised organisation. The aim and objectives of the Council of Nokma is to protect and preserve the traditional rights of the Nokmas in administering their land or village. Any A'KhingNokma duly registered at the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council can be a member of the Council of Nokmas.

The organisation has officer bearers, elected by the members of the council. The term of the office bearers is for three years and may be eligible for consecutive re-election. The office bearers consist of - President, Vice President, General Secretary, joint Secretary, Accountant, Treasurer and nine executive members.

Two types of meeting are held - The Annual General Conference and the Executive Committee Meeting.

The Garos are one of the few remaining society who still follow the Traditional Local-Self Governing system after independence and after the enactment of the 'Provisions of the Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled areas) Act, 1996'. We can state that the 'Nokam system' is another form of decentralised governance at the grassroots level as the people in the village are the best to understand their development needs. The impact and effectiveness of different developmental programmes implemented by the Government also depends on the ownership capacities of the people themselves, individually or collectively. Understanding such initiatives would help the Garo tribe to promote their economic growth and improve the quality of life of the rural people. Therefore, it is the duty of the Council of Nokmas to take initiatives in giving advice and directions to the Nokmas, for the well being of the society at large.

Section-4

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON VILLAGE COUNCIL AND TRADITIONAL LOCAL SELF- GOVERNING SYSTEM

Decentralization is a widely used concept, and it is closely linked with democracy, development and good governance. Many research findings clearly demonstrate that decentralization provides an institutional mechanism through which citizens at various levels can organize themselves and participate in the decision making process. The present study examines the dimension of the decentralization process in the rural administration in West Garo Hills District (Meghalaya) - Traditional Local Self-Governing system compared to Lawngtlai District (Mizoram) - Village Council. Both West Garo Hills District and Lawngtlai District comes under the Village Council administration. However, in West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya, though the decentralization

process was implemented with the village council being established under the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council, the rural administration still has a huge dependency on the Traditional Local Self -Governing System called the 'Nokma System'.

It is now generally recognized that a decentralized rural government administration is necessary for sustainable rural development. One of local government's most important roles is to reach to the local people and to deliver basic services to assist them in improving their quality of life. Therefore, it is desirable to examine the current Local Administration and their roles in Lawngtlai District and West Garo Hills District.

State	Name of Districts	Name of Autonomous District Council	Administration Under the Sixth Scheduled for Rural Government Administration	Governing Body at the Grassroots Level
Mizoram	Lawngtlai District	Lai Autonomous District Council	Village Council	Village Council
Meghalaya	Garo Hills District	Garo Hills Autonomous District Council	Village Council	Nokma System

Village Council:

'Village council' has been constituted in both the districts i.e. Lawngtlai and West Garo Hills District in accordance with the provisions of the Sixth Scheduled of the Constitution of India.

Village Council Act:

'Village Council Act' has been passed by the legislative District Council in accordance with the Acts, rules and regulations of each Autonomous District Council under the assent of the Governor of the state.

Election:

Under Lai Autonomous District Council electing members of the village council is done by peoples' assembly, who are entitled to vote under any election. Electing members of the village council now take place after every five years. All the elected members hold their respective post during their term.

In West Garo Hills District, members of the Village Council are not elected by the people. The Nokma is the leader or chief of a particular land which is owned by him and members of the village council are generally the elders from the Nokma close relatives. This is the traditional system that is still followed in running the local administration.

The effectiveness and functionality of local government units requires elected representatives who are popular, committed and action oriented. This requires government to ensure that elections for local governing bodies are also done through proper election by the local people in each village while the Nokma can still take his place as the head of the Council. Without proper popular representation, local interests cannot be protected and local initiatives cannot receive the required levels of support.

Executive Body:

Under the village Council in Lawngtlai District, an executive body consist of president, vice-president and a secretary in each Village council in which the executive function is vested. The president and vice-president are elected by members of the Village Council from amongst themselves by a majority of vote. However, appointment of the secretary is done by the Village Council president from the elected members of Village Council.

In the Nokma system, the Nokma is the chief or head of the village. The council of Nokma consist of seven member including the Nokma and secretary. Appointing members of the Nokma is done by selecting elders from the Nokma close relatives.

The local governing body is an important process in decentralised governance and therefore instead of appointing council of members directly by the Nokma, the people should have the freedom to elect their own leaders in representing them.

Women's Representation:

The representation of women for members of the village council is directly elected by the peoples' assembly following the 73rd constitutional amendment to reserve seats for women in elected bodies under Lawngtlai Autonomous District Council.

However, we do not see women representatives in the Nokma Council of members though the Nokma System is hereditary and followed the matrilineal system of inheritance.

To have an effective local governing system, representatives from both male and female should be allotted and equal power should be given to the female member.

Local Representation:

Both the districts have representatives from each local area. However, local representatives in Lawngtlai District have a more significant role in decision making as they are representatives for the people who elect them and they work solely for the well being of the society.

In the Nokma system it is more towards clan based representation. To have an effective local governing system, local representatives should be directly elected by the people.

Power and Functions:

Both the Village council and Nokma system have legislative powers as well as judicial powers depending on the customary law and traditions followed in each region. The powers and function relating to the fields of legislation, administration of justice, general administration, finance etc of the village Council may vary in each Autonomous District Council.

Staffing Levels:

The village council of Lawngtlai District have members of the council elected by the local people for the rural development projects in representing the needs of the village people.

In the Nokma system the staffs representing the people for rural development projects are not directly elected by the people, it is the Nokma and his close relatives taking decision for the local people.

Training:

Members of the village council are called in by Government officials as when required in briefing about the new plans or schemes that has been implemented by the government. As such we see coordination from both the parties which make the work more effective as the people in the village are the best to understand their developmental needs.

The same training or briefing is done under the Nokma system as well but it cannot be effective if the members of the councils are appointed elders and not representatives elected by the people to speak on behalf of them. It will be more on a decision by the members of the council.

Lines of Communications and Accountability:

There is proper coordination between the Village Council and Government which helps in the functioning of a local government system to be more effective and people oriented.

Lack of coordination between elected representatives and government staff hampers normal local governing functions. The connection between the Nokma system and higher levels of government is limited in reporting and budgetary planning requirements.

By comparison, the Village Council has a more tenable position within the government structure because of the constitution of its sub-committees. Every sub-committee has wide-ranging powers. They are headed by elected members and also include officials from the relevant Government departments. This creates automatic access and mutual understanding. Accountability is more immediate and shared.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION:

Decentralization denotes the transfer of power and authority from the central government to local units of the government for meeting of grassroots people demand. However, decentralization in the 'Nokma system' is a political issue that arises from political commitment of the Nokmas as it is a traditional system of local governance and not governance based on the choice of the people themselves.

Village council is not only meant for decentralization of power and people's participation but it is also for supporting rural development and strengthening the planning process at the grassroots level. It has been entrusted with the responsibilities for implementation of all programmes directly aimed at alleviation of rural poverty. In the village Council system, the relation between the people and members of the village council is cooperative, their roles and functions are clearly specified. As per the 73rd amendment, reservations of seats for women have also been effectively carried out.

It is clear that 73rd Amendment was for all practical purpose, delegated responsibilities for the design and implementation of decentralization to the state. This amendment gives the constitutional mandate, process of democratic decentralization and the power to formulate planning for economic development and social justice. Unfortunately, we do not see the main aims and objectives of the decentralization happening in the 'Nokma system' of governance as it is the Nokma who has all the power and authority in running the local administration at his own will and not at the interest of the local people. The roles and functions of the members of council under the Nokma have not been clearly specified. It is mostly dependent on the decision of the Nokma himself and the nominated elders from his close relatives. The Garos follows the matrilineal system and the Nokma System is hereditary which is passed down from generation to generation. Surprisingly, we do not see much of the women participation in the administration system.

The process of decentralization of development through 'Village Council' in West Garo Hills District needs to be more people oriented so that the local people will have their own rights to raise their voice in improving the administration system. However, this does not suggest in breaking the traditional bureaucracy that has been followed. Corrective measures should be taken so that the people will have their own choice in electing at least the members of the Nokma Council while the Nokma still serves as the head of the local governing body. A clear road map should be prepared for the functional role and responsibilities of the Nokma and his council. The road map should provide strategies to give a bigger voice to local people by activating a new political structure at the Nokma System. Electing members of the council should be done like any other village council in other states. The relationship between Nokma and local government should be cooperative and complementary. The local people should also have a voice in evaluating the level of improvement in local services.

If the above suggestions can be taken into account and corrective measures are taken, it may enhance the level of people's participation and the 'Traditional local self - governing system' will not be centred around the 'A'khingNokma' alone. The local people will also be able to take part in all the process of local administration and therefore the aims and objectives of decentralisation will be at place and we will be able to see a better local governing system for the betterment of the local people of West Garo Hills District - Meghalaya.

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Tai Phake Way of Life:

A Description of Tipam Phake Village in Assam

*Dr. Pranjal Samra**

The Tai Phake community of Assam originally migrated from Moun-Mao, an earlier kingdom situated in the present Yunnan province of South China across Myanmar and then Pat Kai hills and finally entered Assam through Paang Shau Pass in 1775 AD, embraced the Brahmaputra valley as their home and finally started residing in the easternmost parts of Assam since 1850. They follow Hinayana(Therawada) sect of Buddhism. They have a population of about 2000 and mainly reside on the banks of the river Burhidihing. There are a total of nine villages of Tai Phake community in Assam-two in Dibrugarh District and seven in Tinsukia District. Out of the total nine villages we have chosen only Tipam Phake village situated near Naharkatia in Dibrugarh District of Assam.

People in the village have a simple livelihood mainly based on agriculture, weaving and recently on eco-tourism activities. An eco-tourism camp has been established that showcases their indigenous food, attire and unique bamboo houses on raised platforms. Their central focus of life centers round Buddhism and they have a Buddhist monastery in the village to perform religious services and the Monks stay in the monastery to look after the religious services. This paper will highlight in brief the life and livelihood pattern, opportunities and social change in the Tipam village of the Tai Phake community.

- I -

Oxford dictionary of English (2010) defines livelihood as the "means of securing the basic necessities- food, water , shelter and clothing - of life." Blaikie and others (2004) have given the social and cultural meaning of livelihood and mentioned that it is "the command an individual, family , or other social group has over an income and / or bundles of resources that can be used or exchanged to satisfy its needs. This may involve information , cultural knowledge , social networks and legal rights as well as tools , land and other physical resources."

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After defining livelihood we will now highlight the main objectives of the paper which are :

- 1) To trace the origin of Tai Phakes of Assam.
- 2) To depict the social structure of the Tipam Phake village and its changes.
- 3) To highlight the Livelihood patterns of Tai Phakes in Tipam Phake village of Assam.

- II -

The 'Tai' represent a great branch of the Mongoloid population of Asia. India is a home of more than two million people of Tai origin. In Assam they consist of six groups namely, Ahom, Khamti, Khamyang, Aiton, Phake and Turung. The Tai Ahom race entered Assam early in the thirteenth century. Ahoms were the first group who entered Assam and ruled for about six hundred years (A.D. 1228-1826). Tai community have spread into four major areas of East Asia, namely, Burma, Thailand (Siam), French Indo-China and Yun-nan which were locally known respectively as the Shan, Siamese, Lao and Pai.

Gait (1992:72-73) mentioned "That Sukapha was the leader of the body of Shans who laid the foundation of the Ahom Kingdom in Assam is a fact established, not only by the unanimous testimony of the Buranjis, but also by universal and well-remembered tradition. There is less certainly as to the precise state from which he came, but there seems no reason to discredit the statement of the Buranjis to effect that it was Maulung. In any case, there can be no possible doubt that the original home of the Ahoms was somewhere in the ancient kingdom of Pong. They are genuine Shans, both in their physical type and in their tribal language and written character. They called themselves Tai (meaning "Celestial Origin"), which is the name by which the Shans still designate themselves, and they maintained a fairly continuous intercourse with the inhabitants of their original home until very recent times. Nor is their moment across the Patkai by any means an isolated one. The Khamtis, Phakials, Aitons, Turungs and Khamjangs are all Shan tribes who have, at different times, moved along the same route from the cradle of their race; but the Ahoms were the only ones who did so before the conversion of its inhabitants to Buddhism. The other Shan tribes of Assam are all Buddhists, which shows that they migrated at a later date. The Turungs, in fact, did not reach the plains of Assam until the beginning of the nineteenth century."

Thakur (2003:790) opined that "The Tai Phake claim that they are descendants of the Tai Royal officials and that they had a principality of their own in Hukong Valley. This may be correct because Pha means king or chief and Ke means an official. Descending from the hills the Phakes entered into business transactions with the Assamese people of the plains. In the rural areas of Assam the people have had the habit of enquiring about a visitor's caste whenever they came in contact with such a visitor. Thus when the Phakes, too, had to reveal their caste before the Assamese people, they introduced themselves as 'Phake Yat' i.e. people belonging to Phake caste or tribe. It is likely that

in the course of time Phake Yat might have changed into Phakeyel or Phakial. The Phakes are one of the branches of the Tai groups who entered Assam in the later half of the 18th century. They passed through the Patkai range and lived in Mogoung (a little above Ningroo on the Buri Dehing) till 1700 A.D."

At present, the Tai-Phake is a small community of 2000 people and lives in nine villages of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts of Assam. In Dibrugarh district there are two villages which are Nam-Phake and Tipam Phake which is situated 60 kms in South-East direction and 65 kms from Dibrugarh Town respectively. Nam-Phake village is actually 5 km away from Naharkatia and Tipam Phake village is 3 km away from Joypur in the eastern side. Both of these villages are situated on the bank of river Buridihing of Naharkatia area of Dibrugarh district of Assam.

Other seven villages of Tai Phakes of Assam are located in Tinsukia district. These are Bor Phake, Man Mou, Man long or long Phake, Ningam Phake or Nigam, Nonglai, Phaneng and MOUNGLONG. Moreover a few Phake families are settled in the Namsai (Lohit District) and Lalung (Bordumsa, Changlang district) areas in Arunachal Pradesh. As for instance Wagun and Lung kung villages are there in Arunachal Pradesh.

The geographical distribution including number of families in the all nine villages are shown below :

Table 1.1 List of Tai Phake villages in Assam with their geographical location, total number of households and their population.

Sl. No.	Name of the Tai Phake village	Geographical location	Total Tai Phake Household	Total Population
1	Nam Phake	5 km away from Naharkatia Town in Dibrugarh district (60 km from Dibrugarh Town) established in the year 1850. A Naga village and a part of Faltootala Kachari village lie in the east of Nam Phake. Dihing Kinar Bengali gaon and Cherepajan are located in the western boundary of the village, to the south is the Baghmora gaon inhabited by the Ahoms and a part of Faltootala Kachari gaon. There is river Buridihing on the North of Namphake village.	80	660

2	Tipam Phake	3 Km away from Joypur in the eastern side, 8 km from Naharkatia Town in Dibrugarh District (65 kms from Dibrugarh town) established in the year 1850. The river Buridihing and a part of Tipam village inhabited by Assamese and Bengali and mixed population from the southern boundary with a Eco camp situated in the west along with river Buridihing. The Tipam Phake village is situated on the northern side of river Buridihing with Ushapur village inhabited by Kayastha and Kalita people and Chengelijan village inhabited by ex-tea garden labourers in the Northern side. On the eastern side lies Ouguri Bengali gaon inhabited by ex-tea garden labourers.	29	210
3	Bor Phake (Man Phake Neu or Ingthong)	It is under Margherita sub division in Tinsukia district and is the oldest Phake village established in the year 1830. In the north of the village there is the river Buridihing and to the south lie the Margherita station and the Margherita Lekhapani road and Ketetang market is on the western boundary.	30	179

4	Manmo (Man Mo)	It was established in 1840. This village is the second oldest villages of the Tai Phakes.	10	69
5	Nonglai (Man Nonglai)	It was established in 1936.	3	26
6	Long Phake or Long gaon (Man Long)	It is situated under Margherita sub-division and was established in 1938. Maichangpani gaon lies on the north of Long Phake village. On the west lies Ulup village, on the east Toklong- Madhupur village and on the south lies Long Lauum village.	20	113
7	Mounglang (Man Mounglang)	It was established in 1900. The bank of river Buridihing forms the northern boundary of the village. The Tai Phakes families live peacefully with other tribes of the village.	5	30
8	Ninggam (Man Nigam)	It is situated in the Margherita sub- division under Lekhapani area. It was established in 1938. The river Buridhining forms the northern boundary of the village. The river Tirap and a Bengali gaon is on the west, Komcha gaon and Pilcha Gaon are on the south, and Kolha gaon is on the east.	17	113

9	Phaneng (Man Phaneng)	It is in Lekhapani in Tinsukia district. It was established in the year 1910. The village is bounded by river Tirap and Rampur village on the north, Hunayn, Kenia and Balijan on the south, Tirap conserved forest area on the east and river Tirap and Manche field on the west.	22	26
		Total	216	1426

In this study we will only take Tipam Phake villages as the sample village of Dibrugarh district as being one of the largest populated villages of the Tai Phakes. The study is based mainly on the data collected both from the primary and secondary sources. The primary data are gathered through survey, interview method and observation. The secondary data were based on books, journals, official documents, magazines, newspapers and other published materials.

The respondents of this study were the villagers specially the head of the household (in case not available, then any other number is taken), the monks, senior citizens of the surrounding locality and the village headman. A total of 73 respondents were interviewed with purposive sampling method. We also tried to give representations of different strata of the villagers while using purposive sampling method. Thus the category wise distribution of the respondents were as follows:

Table 1.2 Category wise selection of respondents

Sl. No.	Respondents	Numbers
1	Headman	1 no.
2	Senior citizens	10 Nos.
3	Villagers	60 Nos.
4	Monks	2 nos.
	Total	73 nos. of respondents

- III -

The Tipam Phake village is built on the bank of the river Buridihing and are surrounded by paddy fields, other non Phake villages and jungles. The cremation ground is located at the far end of the village and is surrounded by trees. They speak the Tai languages (which is another Thai branch of Thai-China group of Tibbeto-Chinnesse language) among themselves and with the Assamese they speak Assamese. Apart from that with the contact of Hindi, speaking Bengali and Tea Garden community they are learning these language as well. The monks from the village and few elders have sound knowledge of Pali language. Pali languages is actually taught in the Buddhist monastery of the villages.

The economy of the Tai - Phakes are primarily agricultural. Out of the sixty respondents of villagers category, 47 numbers (78.33%) of them were mainly farmers and 13 numbers (21.66%) of them are engaged in ONGC, Oil India Ltd., like Police, forest and other offices of the state Government or as Doctor, Nurse, Pharmacist, Engineer / Jr. Engineer, Bank Employees, Teachers, contractor, daily labourer and so on. In this there are four female service personnel. Though they are service personnel they also do cultivation in their agricultural land. They have minimum 3 bighas of land to a maximum of 20 bighas of land including basti land. Taking help of domestic labourers in agricultural practices is found. They also lease out land to non-phakes like Biharis, Bengalis, Nepalis and Assamese in adhi system that is share cropping system. The main cultivation is paddy and other crops and mustard, corn, ginger, turmeric, arum, potatoes, betel nut, tokou (leaves of a variety of plam) bamboo etc. They usually engage buffaloes in their earlier days for ploughing and now uses bullocks with wooden ploughs with small iron shares. Their land is fertile and they get sufficient cultivation for their consumption and for selling it in the market. Cattles, Buffaloes, Poultry and ducks are the main livestock in the villages. Different kinds of Sarai, hats, baskets, wall hanging, shoulder Bag, handkerchief, lungis, turban, mekhela, chadar are some of their important hand made items. The people are satisfied with what they have and there are quite a number of businessmen who earn money by selling those items. They also sell Milk and other agricultural and poultry products. 55 numbers (91.66%) of the respondents of villagers category informed that they have monthly income between Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 10,000 whereas 2 numbers (3.33%) of the respondents of villages category have monthly income level between Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 30,000 and 3 numbers (5%) of the respondents of villagers category opined that they have monthly income between Rs.15,000 to Rs.20,000. They have a self-sufficient economy.

It is found that a new trend is emerging in case of their family structure, as Tai Phake families are lineal joint families in Nature. But 17 numbers (28.33%) of the respondents of villagers category stays in nuclear families and rest 43 numbers (71.66%) stays in lineal joint families with parents, married son and unmarried sons

and draughts and grandparents. Though there are nuclear families now, but they maintain a cordial relationship even after separation. The average family is found as consisting 6 to 7 members. Their houses are of platform type and made of indigenous material, such as, wood, bamboo, cane and tokou leaves. Houses are of rectangular shape and known as Changghars or 'stilt house', rested on wooden poles (now even concrete beams). They are constructed in such a way that there is sufficient land for vegetable cultivation and flower gardens. The floor of the platform house is made up of bamboo. The majority of the respondents of villagers category (58.33%) of the Tai Phakes are still living in Kutcha house, though 41.66% are having semi pucca houses. It was observed that except 5-6 houses which are Assam type structure, rest all other houses of the Tipam Phake village are traditional type. 3 numbers (3.52%) of the senior citizens of the surrounding areas of the Tipam Phake village informed us that about 4-5 families have come out of their respective villages and build Assam type Pucca houses which are more durable in nature.

Tai Phake society is patriarchal. Father is the owner of property and he divide lands equally among the sons and keep one share for his use. After his death, the sons who lives with him and takes care of him till his death will get the property. Women have no right of inheritance, daughters and widows do not inherit property. Property of the childless widow goes to the brother of the husband and if any child is born after the death of the husband, the property reverts to the child. Families in the villages are united with common bond of Kinship system.

In case of marriage, clan exogamy is the rule of Tai Phakes and marriage outside the community is not preferred. They are monogamous and polygamy is not Forbidden in the sense that if the man has the requisite means to support their family. It is the bridegrooms' maternal uncle's daughter who gets the top preference. If not they select any other girl from a different clan. Bride price is taken in the Phake marriage. Only three numbers (5%) of respondents of the villagers category from Tipam Phake gone for marriage with non phakes. All the respondents of the study informed that the age for boys and girls for marriage is increased by at least 5-7 years. Earlier the age of marriage of boys was 20-25 years and for girls it was 16-20 years. Widow remarriage is acceptable and divorce is not a common phenomenon among Tai Phakes. Extra marital relations are not tolerated by the Phake society. There is no instance of child marriage.

A formal name giving ceremony is observed by the Phakes for naming of a new born child after 15 days or one month from the date of birth of a child. This is attended by the invited close relatives and the old women of the villages on the fixed date. There are three segment in the name, first is the prefixed name according to the birth order, second is the personal name which also ascertains the day of the week of his or her birth, the third is the surname which is the name of the lineage of their ancestor.

The respondents of the study informed that the Phakes perform a ceremony in connection with the attainment of puberty by a girl. For two days the girl is confined in a room and on the third days she is bathed in front of elderly women and a white chadar is presented to her. Blessings for her prosperous life is given by the women and the ceremony ends with a feast.

In Tai Phake society, in case of unnatural deaths the body is buried without any ceremony. In case of a natural death, the body of the dead is burnt by the eldest son who puts it on fire while monks chants mantras. After that other relatives put fire. Women do not take active part in the ritual but they can accompany the dead to the cremation ground. The funeral ceremony is performed up to seven days and the monks perform prayers and gifts are offered to them on the seventh day, and a feast is given to the villagers who participate in the funeral. It was found in the study that 11 numbers (18.33%) of the respondents of villages category were illiterate, while 35 numbers (58.33%) were matriculate, 9 numbers (15%) were higher secondary passed and rest 5 numbers (8.33%) were graduate. Out of the total 49 literate persons of the sample villages, 12 numbers (20%) of them were females. The main reason for the high rate of literacy is because of close proximity of educational institutes like LP schools, ME schools, high schools, higher secondary schools and colleges. Also due to their sound economy they can afford their educational carrier. Other respondents of the study, the headman, the senior citizens and the monks also opined that they have a high literacy rate and also reflects about the services of the monastery of the village in their regards.

They follow Hinayana (Therawada) sect of Buddhism. There is a monastery in Tipam Phake village. The villagers took care of the monastery. The villagers provide food and clothes to the monks and they keep the monastery clean and during the time of festivals they decorate the monastery. Buddhist monastery play an important role in every aspect of Tai Phake social life and it is the centre place in their society. The Buddhist culture have highly inference the Tai Phake culture. In every villages of Tai Phake, there is a tradition of giving one's son as trainees (above the age of 10 years) known as Luk or Kiyongs for the monastery who act as attendants of the monks and studied religious books written in the Tai and Pali languages and they become monks in the temple. First of all they become sraman (monk) and then vikshoo (senior monk). All the festivals of Phakes have close link with Buddhist religion except a few of extra Buddhist beliefs and practices.

The secular village organization (village council) and the religious organization of the Buddhist monastery are the two social organization of the Tai Phake village. The village headman (Chowman), the Pathek, that is, reader of the scriptures and the ordinary village elders consists the village council. The monk is the head of the religions organization and the village headman (the chowman) deals with the secular

matters who acts as the president of the village council and the pathek is concern with the religious affairs of the people. Pathek maintains a link between the villagers and the monks. In case of any complaints by the villagers the village headman and other villager elders delivers judgment and punishes the offender. The Tai phakes have a code of traditional law and justice system called the thamachat and the village elders refer to this code for deciding cases. There is no provision for corporal punishment as such but fines and recovered from the offenders in cash or kind. It was reported by the village headman of Tipam Phake that police have never entered in their villages for any crime as such. All the respondents of senior citizens category of the surrounding villages opined that Tai Phakes are peace loving community and there is very less conflict and crime records in the Tipam Phake village of the sample.

From the respondents of the study it was found that the Tai Phakes have different clans namely - thumung, wingken, manhai, chekhap, chowhailung, kangmung, homen, tonkha, pomung, choton, tumten, lokho, misa, homa, mungnoi, chekhen, mahao, kolo and other sub clans. Usually they are named after some natural objects.

This is all about social structure of the Tai Phakes in brief. With the passing of time lot of social changes in terms of positional changes like changes in their dress pattern, food habits, traditional dwelling houses, songs, dances etc. in noticed. T.V., Computer, Radio, Electricity, aluminum and steel utensils, vehicles, gas cylinder, tube well, scooters, bikes, cycle, mobile, toiletries, sewing machine, power tiller, motor pump and other modern amenities appears in the village. Other major changes like marriages with non-Phakes, changes in increase the age for marriage education and economic status, changes in family structure to nuclear families, using of other languages and joining of different new occupation on were observed.

- IV -

So far we have concentrated on origin and social structure of Tai Phake. We will discuss now on the living condition and livelihood pattern of Tai Phakes of Tipam Phake village.

The geographical location of Tipam Phake village is in the bank of river Buridihing surrounded by paddy fields, jungles other villages and Tipam mountain has a unique natural bio-diversity which provides the basic essentialities to the people of the villages, namely food, shelter, fuel, medicine and household commodities, dress and other items. The roads are well connected to the village.

The Phake people take rice as their main food. Steamed rice, leafy vegetables, edible roots, mushrooms, bamboo and cane shoots, fish, meat and eggs are favorite items. They prefer boiled vegetables with indigenous spices which are collected from the forest, Dry fish, dry meat and sour fish items are prepared in their different socio-religious occasions. They take fruits like banana, guava, mango, Jack fruits,

pineapple, black berry and other seasonal fruits. Tea is a popular beverage among the Phakes and elderly people prefer black tea without sugar. Milk finds a place in the daily menu of the Phakes. While asking the respondents about the intake of toxic substances like bidis, cigarettes, opium, Drugs, alcohol and other tobacco products, only 17 numbers (28.33%) of the men folk and elderly women who are the respondents of villagers category smoke bidis and cigarettes and use other tobacco items and occasionally they take alcohol and beer, rest 43 (71.66%) of the respondents of the villagers category do not consume such items. In their society young people are not encouraged to take such intoxicants.

In their agricultural practices they use cow dung as manure for their fields and fertilizers and pesticides are rarely used. Only 25 numbers (29.41%) of the total respondents confirmed that fertilizers, pesticides and hybrid seeds etc. are being used in their fields recently. Sugar occasionally used and wheat products are not used by the phakes.

Phakes are very religious minded people. 14 numbers (23.33%) of the respondents of villagers category follow the either principles and Buddhism (asta sheel) which are (1) right understanding (belief), (2) right thought (3) right action-abstaining from sexual relation with other's wife, (4) right speech, (5) right means of livelihood (6) right exertion (7) right remembrance (8) right Meditation and concentration mindfulness and the ordinary villagers follow five principles of Buddhism (pancha sheel). Sraman and Vikshoo follow the ten principles (Dasa sheel) with utmost care which are non-violence, non-stealing, not having sexual relation with other's wife, not telling lies, not taking any intoxicated liquors, not taking the night meals, non-indulgence in scented flowers or garlands or colorful dress or cozy beds, non-attendances in any theatrical performances, non-interest in gold or silver ornaments. All the 2 numbers of monks in the monastery of Tipam Phake confirmed that they follow these ten principles. Rest 46 numbers (76.66%) follow the Pancha sheel who were the respondents of villagers category. The five principles of Buddhism (Pancha sheel) are - 1) Not to kill, 2) not to steal 3) not to be impure 4) not to be untruthful and 5) not to use alcohol or evil drugs.

Buddhism definitely built a different habit and lifestyle among the people. Practice of hunting (killing animals, birds etc.) taking intoxicants, stealing, illegal sexual relations, telling lies and so on are restricted. It brings peace and happiness to their life. All the respondents reported that there is no case of suicide and mental depression in the Tipam Phake village of Tai phakes.

The daily life of the Phakes have a busy routine of work. People get up from bed at about 4 to 4.30 am except the very old and children. The women have to clean everything and have to prepare the meals which have to be completed by 6 AM and before serving it to their family they have to provide first portion of the food to the Buddhist monastery. Every household of the village provide their first portion

of the food to the monastery. It is given by the oldest women member of the family. Daughters and other women folk help her for cleaning and food preparation process. The male person and domestic servants (if any) go to the field after cleaning their face and come back at around 8 AM and take bath in the river for their meal and tea by that time their children have already taken their meals. Usually they take evening meals at about 8 PM in summer and 6.30 pm in winter and then they go to bed. Now-a-days listening to music and watching TV programmes is also reported by the respondents. Morning and evening prayers are regularly performed in the monastery and villagers attend those prayers. Villagers also attend monastery during different festivals as well.

Women have the responsibility to go to forest for collecting firewood, herbs, spices, edible roots, mushrooms, bamboo and cane shoots and other ingredients of dyeing like certain herbs and creepers. Older man and women also help them in doing these. During flood and rainy season when there is flow of wood in the Buridhing river, the men folk go to collect wood from the river by boats. They take ropes with hooks etc and also engaged in activities like collecting bamboo and cane shoots, etc. Women, children and the older persons use long bamboos with hook to catch wood flowing in the river. But due to ban of cutting woods in the forest, now - a - days it is difficult to get wood during summer in the river. That is why introduction of Gas cylinder and Kerosene stove is seen in the villages of Tai Phakes.

Phakes are fond of colorful dresses which is possible due to the efforts of women folk who are experts in weaving. Every households have their own hand looms. They are also known for using fascinating colours in their cloths by indigenous use of variety of herbs and creepers for dyeing. They discuss several issues and gossip while getting free time in the weaving process. The men folk specially the elders are expert in cane and bamboo basketry works and they known how to construct their houses traditionally. The front room of their house is kept open on one side and is used as a sitting room where usually the elders women folk sit and discuss their issues and help their daughters-in-law in various household works like preparation of meals and keeping small children etc. The elder male persons in the village guard their paddy fields and other cultivation forms birds, monkeys etc. and something take the small children (who do not go to school) to the river side and spend time with them and also pass time with other villagers by discussing religious matters, welfare of the village and other topics. They also sit for discussion with the monks in the monastery. On the other hand children goes to schools and they play different games in the schools. After coming from schools they help their parents in their Leisure hours in carrying the meals and tea for their fathers and servants who are working in the fields. Some of them spend the time in playing different games like high jumps, long jumps, to make bride and groom with pieces of clothes and marriage is performed between doll bride and bridegroom, chi mai tang tin (Tank

Guti), wrestling, kodi khel, hide and seek, to put one over the one's shoulder and to run to the destinations, to run with one foot, four children playing with go round and round with a handkerchief and hand and will drop it behind someone and if he see it then will make round if not then make him out by patting on his back, the left leg of one is tied with the right leg of another and have to run to a destination.

Tug of war even played by adults in the festival of Maiko Sum Phai (bidding fare well to the cold season) where two parties pull the tug to its side and the one who can cross the mark is declared winner. It is a fact that in almost all Phake festivals responsibilities are given to the elders as well as the young people. Usually at the end young people have to prepare the feast and merry making and laughter fills in the complete environment. 25 numbers (41.66%) of the respondents of villagers category reflect that they play cards during different functions in the villages. Music, traditional songs and dances are also part of their culture.

Phukan (2005:91) writes in Phakes "... joking relationship exist between a man and his wife's younger sister. Similarly the elders do not find any fault if a women cuts jokes with her husband's younger brother. ... joking relationship also exist between Hu(e) Br Wi and Hu(y) Br Wi also, and grandparents and grandchildren."

60 numbers (100%) of the respondents of the villagers category informed that they know swimming and they prefer to take bath in the river though they have tube-wells in their respective houses. If they are in hurry then only they take bath tin tube-well, otherwise even the old people and the children take bath in the river. They use tube well for drinking water. The monks of the monastery also know swimming and which is equally true in case of children. It is informed by the respondents that mostly children and adults use by-cycle to travel to different areas and schools. Earlier boating was a very popular activity of Phakes but it was informed by 32 numbers (53.33%) of the respondents of villagers category that due to unavailability of wood logs from the forest due to the ban on cutting such logs, boats in the villages are disappearing, hardly they have 10-12 boats in the Tipam Phake village. It was in the early days upto 1970's when they travelled for 3-4 days to their villages located in Tinsukia district by boat only and marriages are conducted by boats which is the mode of communication to their other villages. They use bullock carts to carry paddy seedling, cow dung and harvested paddy.

Though, Phakes lives on hunting in their earlier days, but now due to impact of Buddhism, 15 numbers (25%) of the respondents of villages category opined that there are still people in the villages who go for hunting of birds, squirrels, monkeys and other animals. Rest 41 numbers (68.33%) of the respondents of villagers category talk about the damages of their cultivation by monkeys. Fishing is another popular activities of Phakes but those who have taken the 'asta sheel' do not go for that. Different techniques like by Bare hand, by constructing artificial barrier and then by using bamboo spikes and by traps and nets and used to catch fishes as informed

by the respondents. They catch fish for their own consumption and group fishing is resorted when a marriage ceremony is solemnized as fish in one of the main item in their marriages. 38 numbers (63.33%) confirmed that they were engaged in such activities. Although there is a taboo that fishing implements are not taken inside the campus of a monastery and one should not enter the monastery coming straight from fishing expedition. Also the fishing implements should kept out of the main house when monks are invited to their house for presiding any religious ceremony.

Phakes get some leisure time in between transplantation and harvesting. This is the time when people visit different villages, women purchase yarn for their clothes and also engage in other works like removing the weeds and fencing the fields and stray cattle or the monkeys. Such jobs and performed by almost all members of the family including their children. Cutting the leaves of the Takau trees and storing them in pools of water for becoming stronger, constructing and repairing their houses are other activities during the slack period.

13 numbers (21.66%) of the respondents of villagers category informed that they have pucca bathroom, 47 numbers (78.33%) have kutcha bathroom. Regarding the toilet facility only 16 numbers (26.66%) of the respondents of villagers category have sanitary latrine in their household while the rest 44 numbers (73.33%) have pit-type latrine. 14 numbers (23.33%) of the respondents of the villagers category reported that they do not have electricity in their household and only 8 numbers (13.33%) do not have tube well in their household. All the 2 monks interviewed in the study informed us that both pucca bathrooms and sanitary facilities are available in their monastery.

The respondents of the villagers category informed us that they go for allopathic treatment in Joypur state dispensary located 2.5 km away from Tipam Phake village and to Naharkatia town Hospital located at a distance of 8 kms from Tipam Phake village. They are totally dependants on medical doctors for delivery cases.

In 2010 a Tai Phake Eco-tourism camp was established in Tipam Phake village. Lot of national and international tourist visited the camp and there is provision of staying in comfortable bamboo cottage built in the traditional Tai Phake Chang Ghar style overlooking Buridihing river. Home stay provision in the villages is also made. Ethnic food is prepared for the visitors. Tourist purchase their traditional items. 6-7 numbers of villagers from the Tipam Phake village were absorbed in the Eco-camp for different activities like preparing ethnic food, maintaining and looking after the camp, act as a guide. International Tourists from Thailand, Germany, USA, UK, Australia, Russia and from other countries have already visited these villages.

- V -

To conclude one can say that Tai Phake is a little community of around 2,000

souls. They have successfully kept their unique identity with their own language, customs and traditions with a elaborate social structure. They are the branch of the great Tai race and had a principality of their own in Hukawng Valley in then Barma. Later half of the 18th century and entered then undivided Assam by crossing the Patkai Hills Range. Agriculture is their prime occupation and there are some people who are engaged in service sector, business, and as daily wage earners as well. Buddhism is the cementing force of Tai Phake society that bring happiness and peace to their society. Of late social changes are noticed in Tai Phake society.

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Tribal Livelihood Patterns of Dhalai District, Tripura: A Geographical Study

Suman Das

Abstract:

The present paper is an attempt to explore the influence of physical environment on its habitants (tribals) livelihood patterns on the basis of primary data collected from the households at Longtarai valley sub-division in Dhalai district, Tripura (North-East India). The undulating hilly and sloppy terrains are used for jhum cultivation and rubber plantation and synclinal valleys are used for agricultural practices. The huge forest cover helps them to practice grazing and pasturing. The hot and humid climate of the study area promotes them to work hard in their own working place. Some of the tribals are dependent on forest based products for their sustainable livelihoods and others are engaged in piggery, goatery, mushroom cultivation and poultry farming is a livelihood pattern for their survival and existence. The study reveals that the livelihood patterns of the tribals are more or less dependent on its physical environment. The present study winds up with a line that 'physical environment makes influence on the livelihood patterns but it is the human who utilizes the physical environment to fulfill their own necessitates'.

Key words: physical environment, tribals, livelihood, terrain, climate, jhum, rubber plantation

Introduction:

There has been a rapid proliferation of livelihoods research during the last decade especially in the second half of the 1990s (Murray, 2002; P-3). Livelihoods perspectives start with how different people in different places live. A variety of definitions are offered in the literature, including, for example, 'the means of gaining a living' (Scoones, 2009; Pp-172). A livelihood encompasses income, both cash and in kind, as well as the social institutions (kin, family, compound, village Suman Das, student of M.Phil, Geography Department, Gauhati University.

email: sumangeo03@gmail.com and so on), gender relations, and property rights required to support and to sustain a given standard of living (Ellis, 2007; P- 4). A livelihood also includes access to, and benefits derived from, social and public services provided by the state such as education, health services, roads, water supplies and so on (Lipton and van der Gaag, 1993; Blackwood and Lynch, 1994). The term livelihood attempts to capture not just what people do but the resources that provide them with the capability to build a satisfactory living, the risk factors that

they must consider in managing their resources (Ellis and Freeman, 2005; Pp- 2). The traditional livelihood system of tribal people (also known as adivasis) has been based on shifting cultivation and collection of edible forest produce. Such a system was rendered sustainable by a level and pattern of utilization of land and forest resources, which ensured their self-generating capacity. When shifting cultivation began to decline from about the second decade of the 20th century, and tribal people took to settled agriculture mainly on the uplands, they actively adapted to upland conditions by growing a large variety of crops. Such a livelihood system also provided for a nutritionally balanced food consumption basket. All in all, one may say that tribal people were perhaps the earliest 'social ecologists': tribal people's economic conditions of existence were rooted in both subsistence and conservation ethics (Padhi and Panigrahi, 2011; Pp-7). Studies focusing on livelihood and environmental change were also an important strand of work. A concern for dynamic ecologies, history and longitudinal change, gender and social differentiation and cultural contexts meant that geographers, social anthropologists and socio-economists offered a series of influential rich picture analyses of rural settings in this period (Scoones, 1996). This defined the field of environment and development, as well as wider concerns with livelihoods under stress, with the emphasis on coping strategies and livelihood adaptation (Scoones, 2009; Pp- 174)).

Studies on Livelihood:

Livelihood perspectives have central to rural development thinking and practice in the past decade. Their conceptual roots have shaped the way they have emerged. This will enhance the capacity of livelihoods perspectives to address key lacunae of knowledge, politics, scale and dynamics of livelihood. A mobile and flexible term, 'livelihoods' can be attached to all sorts of other words to construct whole fields of development enquiry and practice. These relate to locales (rural or urban livelihoods), occupations (farming, pastoral or fishing livelihoods), social difference (gendered, age-defined livelihoods), directions (livelihood pathways, trajectories), dynamic patterns (sustainable or resilient livelihoods) and many more (Scoones, 2009). Livelihoods approaches encompass a broad church and there has been some important work that has elaborated what is meant, in different variants of different frameworks, by 'transforming structures and process', 'policies, institutions and processes', 'mediating institutions and organizations', 'sustainable livelihoods governance' or 'drivers of change' (cf. Davies and Hossain 1987, Hyden 1998, Hobley and Shields 2000, DFID 2004). Livelihoods research 'look around' at a moment of time to reconstruct change over time for effective 'policy-making' for the future. Three different approaches to livelihood research respectively the circumspective, the retrospective and the prospective. A Livelihood Diversity Index (LDI) was developed for income sources which varied significantly from household to household (Murray, 2010). The tribals of Tripura are basically agriculturists; many of them still depend on

Jhum or shifting cultivation. The Jhumias (Jhumias are the tribals who do Jhum cultivation) of Tripura were considered to be self-sufficient in food production in the past but the situation has changed radically now because the govt. of Tripura has banded the Jhum cultivation and therefore they may migrate to elsewhere for their livelihood (Das Gupta, 1986, 1996). Since a large part of the State is under forest cover, the problem of tribal livelihoods in forest areas is a challenging one in respect of both socio-economic and ecological development (Tripura Human development Report, 2007) and has also come up with a number of innovative ideas to reduce the practice of Jhum, and promote alternate livelihoods as an alternative source of income for tribals (Sarkar, 2010). The nature and dimensions of change in the lives and livelihoods has occurred (Ghosh and Choudhuri, 2011).

It is in this point of view; an attempt has set to present an understanding of the adjustment between physical environment of the tribals and their livelihood patterns in Dhalai district, Tripura. The realistic portion of the study accentuates the existing livelihood patterns of the tribal peoples. The main objective of this paper is to seek the adjustment of tribal livelihood patterns with its living natural environment.

Area, People and Methods: The present study was held on among the primitive tribal groups of Dhalai district, Tripura, which is the largest district in state and dominated by tribal peoples. Dhalai district lies between 23025'19" N to 24015'37" N latitudes

and 91045'01" E to 92010'26" E longitudes. The total area of this district is 2495 km². Dhalai district is composed of four sub divisions and five blocks of which 70% area is enclosed by forest area and 59 % of total population is belonged to ST communities and wealthy in bio-diversity and natural resources. There are mainly five tribal groups are residing and usually they used to live in the 'Hills and Tillas' for their safety and ethnic reasons. Out of these four sub-divisions, the area of the present study was 'Longtarai Valley', a sub-division of Dhalai district, in total of 100 households has surveyed to gather appropriate data which will helpful to reach the goal of this study through 'Structured interview schedule' method on the basis of random sampling and 'Focus group discussion' method for knowing their adjustments on physical environment.

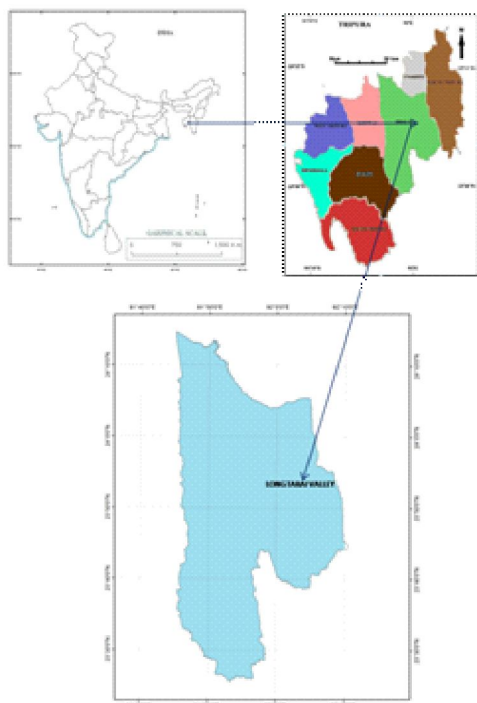


Fig: Location map of the study area

Physical background of the study area:

The present study area is a most hilly area among the eight districts in Tripura. About 70% of the total geographical area of this district is covered by undulating terrains and narrow valleys. General height of these hills ranges varies from 130 to 759 meters. The hilly tracts in the state Tripura is composed of poorly fossiliferous succession of alternating shale, mudstones, siltstone and sandstones of Neogene Group (Ganguly, 1982). The hill ranges are usually anticline ridges and river valleys are synclinal valleys. There mainly two rivers- Dhalai and Manu drained through this district and generated large synclinal valleys which promote settled agricultural practices and settlements near the river banks as this area is facing problems of safe drinking water. The soil texture of the study area is fine loamy to coarse loamy soil group. The present study area is characterized by lateritic soil, younger alluvial and older alluvial soils with in some extent reddish yellow brown sandy soil. Dhalai district is having the largest Natural vegetation in Tripura. The study area comprises more than 70% vegetative area and largely is having moist mixed deciduous forest with some other herbs and shrubs. The climate of the study area is mostly hot and humid with moderate temperature. The area experiences three seasons i.e. summer, rainy and winter. The area usually gets immense rainfall during south-west monsoon season till September. The average annual rainfall in the study area is 2194 mm. the average no. of rainy days in the present study area is 98 days. The temperature of the study area varies 20°C to 34°C and in winter it goes down 9°C and in 2013, the lowest temperature falls near about 30°C. The humidity in general is high throughout the year. In summer season the relative humidity varies between 75 to 90 percent in morning and from 50 to 60 percent in the evening. In rainy season, the relative humidity is 80-90 percent in the morning and 60 to 70 percent in the evening. Low wind speed (0.4-4.5) km/hr. is found in winter season and high wind speed (8.4) km/hr is found in summer and rainy seasons. Maximum wind speed of 8.4 km/hr is observed during June 2005 and minimum wind speed of 0.2 km/hr. is observed during November 2010. The overall environment of Dhalai district is calm and pleasurable.

Livelihood patterns of the tribals:

The tribal peoples those who are living in the study area usually do agricultural works. The lion portion of the people are engaged in agricultural practices usually they together practice Settled agriculture and Jhum cultivation though Jhum cultivation has been banned by the Govt. of Tripura because it is not scientifically good for the soil as well as for the environment too but the tribals of this area still practicing Jhum cultivation as it is one of their cultural practice they perform to hold their heritage and also is the way to feed their stomach. The aged persons in between 35-55 and more, males and females are usually worked together in the field preferably females. On the basis of households' survey, 46% of households are

engaged in both jhum and settled agriculture as they have both hilly and plain piece of land to practice these both activities and utilized the land to perform both the practices seasonally. Settled agricultural practice has done by only 8% of households and 11% of households are only practicing jhum cultivation as they don't have sufficient amount of land to perform both the practices. The 18% of households usually don't have sufficient piece of land to carry out any kind of agricultural activities. Therefore, some of them used to work as a laborer and generally they migrated to the nearby areas or urban areas in search of work and their migration are called short-distance migration as they come back home in the same day as the distance is not too far and others are engaged in mushroom cultivation, goatery, poultry farming, fishery, piggery. With the help of these livelihood patterns, somehow they can manage to feed their stomach. Only 5% of household's tribal peoples are totally dependent on forest based products like woods, fruits etc. and they made this as a livelihood pattern. With the help of this forest based products somehow they manage and feed their stomach to exist. Remaining 12% of households are having Govt. jobs, so their livelihood pattern is totally different from others and their standard of living is also decent. Therefore, they usually not interested to do any kind of agricultural practices but before getting Govt. jobs, they also did the same agricultural works. The tribals who practice settled agriculture and jhum cultivation both, now they are interested to perform rubber plantation which is a newly emerged livelihood for them. Rubber plantation gives them more income and upright standard of living. Instead of jhum cultivation in the hilly and tilla parts of the study area, they are practicing rubber plantation in the same piece of land, whereas Govt. of Tripura also promotes and helps the persons or families who wanted to practice rubber plantation. Nowadays, it is seen from the study area that the hilly and tilla parts are full of rubber trees. In rubber plantation areas, the maximum laborers are male, hardly any female labor has seen. Females are usually doing agricultural activities in the paddy fields and in the fields of jhum and rest of time they are busy in household's works.

Impact of physical environment on tribal livelihood patterns:

As the study area is mostly hilly and undulating in character, therefore the habitants who are living in this area generally utilized these terrains for their existence. The sloppy nature of the terrains, help the tribals to do jhum cultivation as they don't have much other choices. The families those who have plain lands near the river, they practice settled agriculture. On the other hand those who have both plain and hilly piece of land, they perform both settled agriculture and jhum cultivation. The persons those who don't have any piece of land to practice agricultural works, they usually converted them as a laborer as the climate of this area is favorable for performing any kind of work as the climate of this area is hot and humid. The tribals of this study area are actually the mongoloids and they have very

well-structured body to perform even hard works whereas the general people cannot do. The huge forest cover of this area is being utilized by the tribal peoples through grazing and pasture. The tribals who don't have sufficient land to practice agricultural works, they got help from the various Govt. schemes and introduce some livelihood patterns like piggery, goatery, mushroom cultivation, fishing and poultry farming etc. which give them quiet a decent income to feed their stomach and meet their other expenses which is essential for surviving in the modern era. Recently, a new livelihood pattern has emerged, called rubber plantation. The climate and soil of this area is apt for planting rubber plants as the soil of this area is acidic and helpful for growing rubber plants. As south-west Monsoon gives abundance rainfall to this area, therefore the rubber trees easily get moisture from the atmosphere and produce latex which ultimately gives rubber to us. The persons who have hilly and sloppy lands, they practice rubber plantation in place of jhum cultivation. As jhum cultivation is not scientifically good for the environment and has some problems like soil erosion, loss of soil nutrient, pollution of the environment through burning before planting jhum seeds. This livelihood pattern gains much popularity among tribals as it provides much income and decent standard of living and meet their expenditures like schooling of their children, medicine, clothes, modern gadgets and other essential household goods. Therefore, the livelihood patterns of the tribals in this area are dependent on the physical environment.

Conclusion:

Considering the present study area is a hilly district with undulating terrains and synclinal valleys and more than two-third of the district's geographical area under the grip of forest cover. The hilly terrains and sloppy tillas are used to practice jhum cultivation and rubber plantation by tribals. On the other hand, in plain areas (flood-plains and lungas) tribals generally do settled agricultural works and made their settlements nearby the fields. Some of the tribals are also practicing piggery, goatery, mushroom cultivation and poultry farming which are very much beneficial for them as climate of the study area permits them to do this kind of practices as a livelihood pattern. The huge forest cover and natural vegetation help in grazing and pasturing. Some aged tribal peoples are dependent on forest based products like collecting woods, fruits etc. which is also a livelihood pattern for the tribals. Tribals do fishing in the swamps and marshes which are formed as a result of depression in between two hilly terrains and in the middle of two tilla lands. The rest of the tribals are worked as a laborer. They worked so hard and sincerely because the climate is suitable for doing such works. So, it should be said that the tribal livelihood patterns are more or less dependent on its physical environment as they utilized their natural environment on their own wants. Therefore, in the concluding part, it is necessary to state that 'physical environment makes influence on the livelihood patterns but it is the human who utilizes the physical environment to fulfill their own necessities'.

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Tagore's Sriniketan experiment in Tribal belt

Vishal C. Bhand

Guru Rabindranath Tagore keenly observed the life of tribal people around him and always searched deep into the lives of rural people. He realized the need for a coherent consolidation and development in the activities pursued by the tribal. After coming to Santiniketan, he decided to kick-start a more coherent rural reconstruction movement in tribal belt of Sriniketan as a natural corollary to his educational institute established in Santiniketan. By establishing Sriniketan, Rabindranath Tagore delved into basic social reconstruction; where as by establishing Santiniketan he was already into an intellectual or spiritual re-orientation of the basic premises on which educational concepts should evolve. It may be said, if Santiniketan added the desired expressions to Tagore's personality, Sriniketan aspired to complete the expression into a meaningful social existence. In short we may observe that Santiniketan & Sriniketan together effectively reflects Tagore's personality in this barren land of Birbhum. Sriniketan was not exactly a brand new idea of Tagore; he had earlier experimented with rural reconstruction in his estate Patisar. The valuable experience garnered in his estate at Patisar helped him immensely in his venture in Sriniketan in and around 1922 AD, and the idea was certainly a pioneering one.

"Modern education (...) has not reached the farmer, the oil grinder nor the potter. If ever a truly Indian university is established it must from the very beginning implement India's own knowledge of economics, agriculture, health, medicine and of all other everyday science from the surrounding villages. This school must practice agriculture, dairying and weaving using the best modern methods... I have proposed to call this school Visva Bharati"

Addresses by Tagore, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, 1963

He realized the isolation in rural life and believed poets, dance, music and other art forms should visit our villages to make our villages lively. We have rich rural cultural practices and without these practices our villages would become dry and dull. 'Working' and 'working with enjoyment' are two different things. Through this approach he wanted villages to feel complete. For this reason Tagore started many fairs (mela) in the ashram. This was a very unique approach to uplift socio-economic status of rural India. This approach not only gave an opportunity to rural craftsmen to display and sell products but also bought sense of pride and dignity in their lives.

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Craft practices are an integral part of any cultural setting. They provide an identity to the people belonging to a particular culture. India has a vast variety of Tribal cultural settings resulting in diverse tribal craft practices.

At the beginning, craft items were produced by different cultural groups to serve specific purposes. Later, with time and changes in society, function of these products changed and at times they were used as items of household decoration; that is moving from function to aesthetic. And now is the time when craft is considered as ornamentation with high price for a particular class of the society.

Craft practices in most of the developed economies are almost stopped. Fortunately, in India, craft practices are still alive especially in tribal areas. However, the craft sector is facing a lot of challenges with new technologies and changing life styles.

Many steps are taken by the Government of India to support the craft sector but a lot is yet to be done at different levels of society.

Challenges faced by the Craft Sector:

There are many issues, however, all of them overlap with each other.

Falling Demand of hand crafted products: With time our mindset changes resulting in changes in our surroundings and taste. After Industrial Revolution our life style has moved into a higher pace. Today we are so impatient that we find it difficult to wait for our computer to boot when we start it or we are much faster when using keys of our cell phone. Our taste has got faster and blunt. Today we find it much easier to maintain stainless steel utensils rather than earthenware.

High Maintenance: Most of the craft items need somewhat higher maintenance; that is cleaning, placing, care and so on with less usability. Often craft items are made of natural material and require regular cleaning and care otherwise they look unkempt and attract lot of unwanted and negative attention in our house. Today we do not have time to put much effort in the maintenance of the craft items. This has resulted into craft items disappearing from middle class home. Hand Crafted lifestyle items are now seen in upper-class houses who can afford to hire a person to take care of these products hence craft has become an expensive proposition and the sole domain of a particular class.

Time consuming and laborious production process increases the production cost. Also, craft items are handmade: lot of time and effort are required while producing them. All this make hand crafted products expensive. As a result result, there is less demand and craft has become class specific. This is also one of the reasons why many craftsmen do not wish to practice/ remain with their craft.

Higher Production Cost: As mentioned above, craft items are made of natural materials and the production process is laborious and time consuming. This has bought up the cost of craft items which have resulted in a fall in demand. Ideally,

low demand in market should bring down the cost, however, this has not happened in the craft sector because (again) craft items are made of natural materials and the production process is laborious and time consuming so production cost would never come down.

Low cost copies: The textile sector sets a good example of this where impression of block print and batik is created with the help of screen printing to bring down the cost and labour. Indeed, Industrial Revolution has made our life much easier but on the other side it has put challenges for many craft practices.

Lack of product diversification: Many craftsmen make products considering market demand. However, many are yet to diversify their products. As mentioned earlier, craft products were designed for a specific purpose and later they served a different purpose in an increasingly urban setting. Often craftsmen are not aware of market demand hence a mismatch in demand and supply is evident.

Young generation of traditional craftsmen is not keen to take up craft practices as it is less rewarding. These youth migrate to the big towns/cities in search of alternative lifestyle/career and end up doing odd jobs. These youth are also attracted towards the fast and glittering urban lifestyle and often craftsmen too do not want their children to continue their practice.

Lack of consumer awareness is another factor that influences the craft market. Consumers are not aware of the fact that most of the craft products are hand-made of natural material. The common man often argues why craft products are more expensive than machine-produced ones and fail to appreciate the craftsmanship, effort and eco-friendly approach.

There is a strong need of more Craft and Design Institutes in India. Design education in India is still not well known in the education sector. We would get shocking results if we calculate the number of institutes offering craft and design degrees against those offering engineering, management and medical courses/degrees.

Opportunities of improvement:

Following are some suggestions to improve the situation.

Reform(s) in Art and Design Education

Bringing traditional craftsmen into the main stream

Design intervention in craft sector

Promotion and public awareness of crafts

Reforms in Education:

Introduction of traditional culture studies as a mainstream course at the school level is urgently and immediately required. One strong reason for the young generation failing to recognise our roots and cultural practices is because culture practices are

not taught and discussed in the schools and later in life they fail to appreciate craft. Introduction of such a course would help the young generation understand the previous generations a degree better while respecting and appreciating other cultural practices. We know how 'much' and 'how' craft is taught in the schools. One class a week is just not enough to learn and appreciate any craft practices. Not to mention the way craft is taught! It is really unfortunate that the school education system of such a big and great nation with an immensely rich craft sector is biased towards theory alone.

The skills-based subjects are completely ignored in schools. Also the fact that students are not exposed to the possibilities and opportunities in the craft sector. It would not be very difficult to find students who are willing to take-up craft as a profession. But the system and society is designed in such a way that a student who is good in craft is never taken seriously and is not encouraged at par with other mainstream subjects. There is a strong need to bridge these gaps and this calls for recognising craft as a mainstream subject.

Bringing traditional craftsmen to the main stream:

Traditional craftsmen can be hired as crafts teachers in schools. Present requirement to become a school teacher is B.Ed degree and none of the traditional craftsmen would possess B.Ed. This change in the qualification requirement for craft teacher would not only improve our school education but also provide opportunities of employment to the craftsmen and would inject a sense of pride into the crafts community. There can be an argument against this as craftsmen are not trained school teachers. But this issue can easily be addressed by providing a bridge course to these craftsmen.

Another way to bring craftsmen into the main stream is by providing scholarships to the children of craftsmen and rural youth to study crafts at school and degree level. Some day this would result into all the craftsmen having a degree and crafts becoming main stream subject. As we all know many crafts in India are not practiced any more. If we fail to attract young talent today, very soon many other crafts would be seen in museums only.

Design Intervention in Craft Sector:

Many craft practices are wiped out and many existing ones are facing stiff challenges due to low market demand. Craftsmen are often found complaining about less market demand resulting in their products not selling well. However, there is bit of difference between 'less market demand' and 'products not selling'. This can actually be read/seen to be the other way round. That is there is a constant demand but only for right (design) kind of products. Bad design would result into falling sales. Since we have a rich craft culture, (to start with) at least all the central universities should have a design department/faculty and all the design departments/

faculties/institutes should have a dedicated craft design department working closely with the craftsmen. These institutes can provide craftsmen with technical inputs, knowledge of modern tools and equipments. Many craftsmen make products with high craftsmanship but these products have no market value because often such products are traditional 'ritual' objects which have absolutely no use/function in the modern urban society.

Skills upgradation can be done while developing products with functional approach without disturbing, and in turn actually utilizing, their traditional skills. Attractive designs, patterns and forms can be developed while keeping the price down. Products for common uses are to be designed understanding the demands of the market. This would promote craft in middle class homes and hearts and help craft rid itself of its exclusive tag. Craft designs can be developed for all users; that is, different age groups, end users and class by blending 'traditional style and present need'. Chains of production(s) can be simplified by implementing a better supply chain and encouraging and promoting bulk orders, as this would also bring down the cost of production and other overhead and allied costs.

Public awareness:

Since craft-and-design education is yet to get the status it deserves in our society, the common-man fails to comprehend, analyse, utilise, and hence ultimately, appreciate craft. Unless this issue is addressed seriously at various levels of personal, communal and governmental levels, the situation is unlikely to improve. The Government of India has started many schemes for craftsmen and has provided platforms to present their skills. But just providing funds to the craftsmen is not enough unless the consumer appreciates/understands the value of the craftsmanship involved. A bigger advertisement campaign is required and use of 'hand-made mark' on crafts items should be started like 'hand loom mark'. Marketing outlet can sell products with information tag; that is, how, where and who made the particular product concerned. And most importantly this awareness should start at the basic levels like schools. Craft should be taught in a better and serious manner in schools.

Conclusion:

A nation like ours with such a wide variety of cultural practices should have a national policy on culture. And craft practices should be an integral and important part of it. Craft practices and promotions would help address many social issues our society is facing today. Issues like employment for rural youth, drugs, alcoholism, education, and so on can directly be addressed by crafts promotion.

We have a big rural tribal population and just 20% of our population lives in the big cities. Hence if not all, then at least most, of our policies should address the remaining 80% of rural population. Measures should be taken to provide employment opportunities to this population. In today's world of modernisation and global-

ization, even the urban youth is struggling to find a job as many companies are reducing their workforce. Given such a scenario, how can a tribal youth from a rural area with traditional skills be accommodated? Higher crime rate in big cities can be a result of this mismatch of demand and supply in the career/workforce ratio in India.

There is a huge scope for improvement in crafts-and-design education in India. Review of crafts course in schools should be made immediately with the introduction of traditional craftsmen teaching crafts in schools. National institutes, Universities including museums can organise regular design development workshop with designers, design students and craftsmen. Department of Anthropology can help in mapping and identification of craft practices.

Crafts should be seen as a site that would generate more employment opportunities without uprooting the tribal practitioners from their roots. On one hand we can retain our craft culture and on the other hand improve socio-economic status of craftsmen and tribal community.

"Tribal Development at Cross Road in the Present Juncture: Way Ahead"

*Dr. Pradip Kumar Parida**

Key Words:

(Tribal Development, People's voice in Development, Tribal Unrest and Movement, Crisis in Tribal Governance, Law and order Problem-it's Socio-Economic Roots in Tribal Zone)

Abstract:

This paper looks into the whole discourse on the contemporary tribal development and the crisis encountered by it. Apparently it seems as if there is considerable amount of mistrust among the tribal on the present development paradigm. In the name development, the Indian state has molded contemporary economic policy in such a way that it creates question mark not only on the environmental issues but also the very existence tribal's due to so called industrialization process, mining, deforestation etc. This is a process of further marginalization for the already marginalized people and also accelerating the process of 'alienation' among the tribal's of the country. When people protest against these types of activities, it is termed as movement against the state. What about ecology of the society and the involvement of the community in terms of maintaining their livelihood vs. the economic development of the state. So that the development of the state and tribal can be integrated. This paper is a noble attempt to discover certain problems in this background.

Introduction:

One of the most important issues after 65 years of independence is the plights of tribal's continuing till date as it used to be in pre-British period. Has the independent India can give due space to tribals to be accommodated in the mainstream development of the country? Due to number of reasons the situation of Scheduled Castes has improved to certain extent in our country in comparison other downtrodden sections of society. The ongoing process of assertion of identity, particularly in electoral politics has been concentrating on Scheduled Caste to a large extent. It is taking a concrete form gradually. Particularly the vote bank politics as a part of Indian democracy is taking a radical form in its approach to dalits' problem. What about the tribals' situation in our country? Are not they citizens of free India?

What about admitting 'tribals' as a group who has been suffering due to number socio-economic-political reasons by accepting the process of so called development, where the tribals are the worst sufferers. The whole concept of development, social justice, growth, participation has to be re-examined, re-designed and re-oriented by taking the problems and plights of tribals at the centre stage.

At the same time these are the areas undergoing a political turmoil including a strong armed protest even sometime secessionist movement against the state of 'India'. Hence there are reasons to look into their problem from sociological, anthropological, political issues apart from economic angle also. In the domain of contemporary governance and the process of creating social justice in our society, the tribal problem has certain specificity. However these problems have not been given due shape in policies, planning programmes though recognized constitutionally. Otherwise the tribal unrest across the state would not have taken a militant and aggressive shape, as we have witnessed in recent times. Starting from north-east, eastern part to central India, though the tribal belt is full of natural resources, forest, mines and minerals, unique varieties of species of flora and fauna and many unique qualities with them. The tribal people are simple, down to earth, living in the lap of nature, vibrant, dynamic, courageous and leading the life of a true 'son of the soil'.

In the context of contemporary India, if we will minutely examine the nature and function of the state, the situation of tribals are not encouraging enough to come to a conclusion that due to constitutional provision, the situation has improved, in comparison to pre-independence period. In terms of all the Human Development Indicators (HDIs), i.e. IMR, MMR, access to primary education and primary health, per capita income, per capita food intake, they are the lowest. In the job sector-be it private or government- both state and union level be it skilled or semi-skilled or unskilled, they are the lowest. Similarly in education-be it primary, secondary, higher, vocational, technical like Medical, Engineering, Law, their presence is abysmal. It is countable and proportionately in percentage wise according to their population, is the lowest. Similarly dropout rate at all level of education system is highest among the tribals. In terms of political representation, it has reasonably increased due to reservation system, but not substantially. Their views and opinions are not aired or reflected on the floor of the parliament or assembly substantially. Naturally it brings the question to our mind, has the tribal population of our country really got some benefit in the post-independent development dynamics of our country. Has it percolated down to the tribal hinterlands? This has to be critically examined minutely, by taking all the development indicators and the space/ position/ status of tribals there.

Development Paradigm and Tribals of India:

Addressing the all India Conference of the tribals held at Jagdalpur of Bastar in Chhattisgarh, Pandit Nehru said in March 1995: 'Wherever you live, you should live on your own way. This is what I want you to decide yourselves. How would you like

to live? Your old customs and habits are good. We want that they should survive but at the same time we want that you should be educated and should do your part in the welfare of your country".

Nehru's Panchsheel are:

1. People should develop along the line of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
2. Tribal rights to land and forests should be respected.
3. We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will no doubt, be needed, specifically in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.
4. We should not over administer these areas or overwhelm them with multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.
5. We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

From the experience of working of 'Panchsheel' for the tribals, it is found

- (i) That we should not force tribals to do things.
- (ii) Tribal rights aim at protecting tribals from exploitation which can be possible only by integrating them with their neighboring people.
- (iii) Tribal officers may work in the area with some local bias and in these conditions experienced non-tribal officers have proved themselves to be anthropological in approach.
- (iv) Tribal programmes must be simplified in nature.
- (v) One has to serve the tribals in a dedicated spirit.

Constitutional Provisions for the Welfare of Tribals:

Apart from all the provisions of fundamental rights, part-III of our constitution, there are number of provisions which deal with tribal problems of our country. Promotion of tribals in respect of education and economy (Article 46), special provisions for appointment of minister to look into the tribal affairs exclusively (Article 164), special administration of Scheduled areas and Tribal areas (Article 244), grants from the union to certain states (Article 275), reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in the House of the people (Articles 330) and in the Legislative Assemblies (Article 332), reservation of seats in special representations article (334), special claim to services and posts (Article 335), provision for special officer for them (Article 338), control of the centre for the administration of Scheduled areas and the Welfare of

the Tribes (Article 339) and special provision for Scheduled Tribes (Article 342). One of the interpretations to these Constitutional safeguards is that the British 'policy of exclusion', has been accepted in a modified form by the Republic of India. The partial exclusion of largely tribal areas followed by special welfare measures offered not only a negative approach but also initiates an imposed programme of change to bring them into the mainstream of Indian population whereas the most desirable course would be to work for the integration of the tribals in the regional and national setting, and for avoiding the creation of a separatist minority with vested interests. Various all India tribal Conferences organized by various organizations including the Government have created new solidarity in tribal India. In the context of present day separatist trends, especially by numerous all India and regional parties, the possible implications of such developments will have to be closely watched and analyzed. The division of whole north-eastern India into different full-fledged states like Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh has to be viewed not only from the point of view of tribal interests but also against the wider canvas of regional and national life.

Community Development Approach for Tribals:

For an overall development of the tribals, the Community Development Programme was introduced. As a matter of fact a programme to be known as community development programme, the active participation of the community is essential. However in the case of tribal development, it was not practically visible. Though ample amount of money was pumped into these programmes through various schemes related to education, agriculture, anti-poverty programmes, horticulture, fisheries, asset creation and many more. The notion of ITDA and ITDP and Tribal Blocks-Specific projects-area wise were undertaken in these schemes. Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations (TDCC) was set up in different tribal areas. If we will minutely look into the tribal welfare schemes throughout the country it was found that there is marked imbalance in development among the tribals. A large number of tribal communities continue to be extremely backward while some of them are still in the stage of hunting and food gathering economy. However, the implementation of tribal welfare measures and the result may be assessed programme wise under broadly five heads as expressed in the outlay on tribal development, i.e., economic, education, health, sanitation, communication and housing, socio-cultural and political.

From the appraisal of Tribal development in the last couple of decades, it is visible that the desired results have not been achieved and our objectives to uplift the tribals have suffered at three levels: (i) policy, (ii) implementation, (iii) recruitment and training of personnel. If we will examine the real approach in detail, it is found that there are some problems. In the first place, the average tribal development block with a population of 25,000 is small enough to provide several services which

are essential for a comprehensive development of tribal people. Programmes like communication, irrigation, processing industry, forestry, vocational education, and secondary education could be effectively implemented with a relatively larger area. As a matter of fact, in many parts of the country tribal economic problems can be handled properly, if it can be addressed in regional approach or some area wise planning. Hence in the fourth Five year plan it was proposed that the Tribal development Blocks situated in a district would be grouped into one or more tribal development areas.

At the district or sub-divisional level, special personnel would be provided to look after the needs of tribal development area as a whole. Depending upon physical features, social structures, communication and economic needs for the each area as demarcated, an effort would be made to draw up a systematic plan of development. This would take into account the resources available under general sectors such as road and transport, agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, co-operation, rural electrification and transmission and distribution, small and processing industries, hill area plans, rural works and programmes for expansion of education and other social services. When large industrial and mining projects are undertaken in tribal areas, steps should be taken simultaneously, as a part of the area plan, to ensure that the local population is helped and equipped to adopt itself to participate in the future development. Local institutions as well as specialists and non-official workers should be intimately associated with the preparation and execution of area development programmes. Groups of villages situated within the district, which inhabited by tribal communities but are not sufficient to form tribal development blocks could be treated as tribal pockets and given attention as part of the tribal development area.

The Area Development Approach:

The development works in tribal areas may be carried on an area basis. This will cover major tribal concentrations and tribal pockets. The broad frame work for the purpose may cover the following: (i) micro-area, (ii) meso-area, (iii) macro-areas (iv) tribal pockets and isolated and comparatively backward tribes, for smooth and all purposive development programmes. The micro area preferably will be of a block consisting population of approximately 10,000, for a specific period. In due course the whole area of the block may be covered. The meso area can be extend to a sub-division with special attention to a few blocks and population of around 3 to 5 Lakhs for a specified time period, to cover the whole Sub division or Taluk. In a similar fashion, a whole district or a particular geographical area can be demarcated and designated as macro-area. Tribal pockets and numerical minor tribes should get special priority and treatment. The tribes with less than 5 percent literacy should get preference. As a matter of fact comparatively backward tribes need our special attention.

Single Line Administration Approach:

The administration given to the tribals should be of single line. One administrator can be appointed as Area Development Commissioner for the area should be held responsible for the whole development work of the region. This ill suit the tribals who lead a simple cultural life. The Area Development Commissioner with the help of anthropologist, planner, sociologist, gender expert, rural development experts should coordinate all the efforts.

Separate Tribal Development Programmes:

The tribal development should not be lagged with the development of Scheduled Castes as both have distinct ecology, concentration and socio-economic life. Along with the acceptance of the area- development approach, the concept of 'welfare' needs to be replaced by 'development'. The welfare approach of helping by just giving aid has not yielded the desired results. The development of the people and area will in itself be an impetus for a better future. It is matter of great hope and expectations and reasonably amount of appreciation that the Ministry of Home Affairs has started implementing these proposals of the Planning Commission from 1975. A new strategy for the development of tribal areas is implemented under under a 'Director of Tribal Welfare', in the Home Ministry. Subsequently a separate ministry was formed named as "Ministry of Tribal Welfare". The development plans are aimed at an integrated development of the tribal areas and primitive pockets.

These are broadly divided into three parts:

- (i) Areas with majority of tribal population- for an area with 50 percent of or more tribal population, sub-plan with several projects areas, is under preparation and implementation.
- (ii) Areas with dispersed tribal population for which Micro-Area projects are under preparation.
- (iii) Isolated primitive communities for which special schemes and action research projects are under preparation.

Findings from Tribal Belts of the Country:

The tribal belts of the country, i.e. Nagaland, Bodoland, Gorkhaland, Mizoram, Tripura, Jharkhand, some part of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh is witnessing a problem of secessionist movement against the state by the tribals. However, it is global phenomena, where the movement of the global political economy is controlling everything today. Whatever might be the causes of these problems, ultimately it is the innocent tribals are the worst sufferers. 'Human Security' is affected to a larger extent. The right to life with dignity is undermined at any cost. The aftermath of neo-liberal regime in the context of globalization is witnessing these types of phenomena all over the world, across the globe. The

reason being when market economy determines the state policies, particularly public policies, rights of the citizens, take a back seat. In this context the most vulnerable sections are 'the sub-alterns', i.e. dalits, tribals, minorities and other socially marginalized sections. However the commonality among all the movements of aboriginals across the world is who controls the natural resources and why the state is taking decisions in an arbitrary manner rather taking the affected into confidence. There is a need of changing paradigm of public policy to address these types of challenges in contemporary time.

Public Policy Dimensions:

All these are part of the local ecology, where an individual is leading his day to day life on the lap of nature. On the name of industrialization where market economy determines everything, who cares about the lives and livelihood issues of innocent tribal's? Are the industrial houses getting clearance from the tribal's panchayats (as per PESA act) genuinely or in fraudulent manner? What is the proper mechanism to get the approval of tribal people? What about the Environment/ Social Impact Assessment? What about placing it in public domain? Who are the gainers and who are the losers at the end of the day? These are very important issues in this context. When we talk about industrialization, do we give also equal importance to our fellow citizens' right to lead a life with dignity? Today we found the undercurrent of a strong Maoist movement in certain states of central India, where the exploitation of natural resources and displacement of tribals due to it, has happened to the maximum extent. This symbolically reflects there is something very serious.

The way natural resources are being exploited for the consumption purposes, which is not only giving a space for indiscriminate use of natural resources, but also creating problems for lives and livelihood of thousands of aboriginal people who are original inhabitants of this country, who are primarily residing in forest, i.e. so called adivasis (tribals). Forget about future generation, even we are not considering our present generations. Otherwise we would not have exploited our recourses in that fashion. Above all the natural resources are not infinite in nature. There is certain limit to it. What about the blue print on it. For example, what is the amount of natural resources, where are they located, exact amount, its utility at present and in future, modality of extraction, who will extract- whether private or government, what is the mechanism for that,- all these issues, are they in public domain.

If we will look into the demand for autonomy or separate state, starting from creation of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand which are primarily tribal dominated state, till the demand for separate Telengana and the ongoing movement for it, the demand for separate statehood, at least autonomy to Darjeeling- 'Gorkha land' and the demand for autonomy for various hill regions and districts of North-East, i.e. - Bodo land, all these examples are testimony to the deteriorating situations of tribal's of the country. Though we cannot accept the demand for secessionist movement, nonethe-

less all these movements are reflection of tribal people's frustration over the Indian state and continuous engagement for separate state or autonomy. The Indian state, political class or ruling regime should not underestimate all these demands. These are litmus test for us. In other words the bottom line is, does the mainstream development of the country have given justice to the tribal population of the country. However there is silver lining in the cloud of darkness in the arena of so called development policies of our country. The tribal people themselves are gradually coming under different platform to demand their legitimate entitlements and even talking about alternatives in this scenario. For example the case of Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) under the leadership of Medha Patekar and her followers are fighting for the rights of the oustees (who are primarily tribal's) due to displacement of Sardar Sarovar Dam/ project on the river Narmada, spreading across 3 states. What about the plights and suffering of those tribals who are displaced? As a matter of fact the water and electricity produced from these dams are going to cater to the needs of the urban population who are primarily non- tribal. In that case, what the tribal are going to get out of their sacrifice for the country. The monetary compensation will be over within days or months. What about their livelihood in a new set up, where they are settled now? What about their income? What about their cultural practices, emotional disturbances and psychological trauma they have undergone because of displacement. Is the rehabilitation and resettlement (R& R policy) of government of India can replace the losses of tribal, which is in reality irreparable losses?

Conclusion:

Today we found the undercurrent of a strong Maoist movement in the certain states of central India, where the exploitation of natural resources and displacement of tribal's due to it has taken to the maximum extent. We must have understood this to relate an individual and state in terms of the 'rights' of the tribal's of the country. If at all we want development of the country by taking 'tribal's' into the main fold, we have to follow it in letter and spirit. As it is well known that tribal people live in community with specificity in cultural practices which is dependent on their surrounding environment, ecology, nature which is integrally related to their culture and day to day life and livelihood, these issues must be integrated with these issues while framing plans and formulating policies for them. Otherwise the situation is going to deteriorate in near future. It is simply a matter of time. This is a big challenge before the present Indian state. How it is leading towards gradual alienation, deprivation from means of production, and more protest- might be armed struggle, bloodshed and ultimately secessionist movements and the state look at them as anti-national in their home land. These are the crux of the problems.

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Role of Tribal women in livelihood with special reference to agro and farming activities.

*Jayanti Bhattacharya**

Abstract:

Women of aboriginal groups are always a part of culture which is under dominance and enormous suppression of superior culture. Even today; particularly in the era of globalization women of aboriginal groups are facing challenges to have a developed and independent entity. Such challenges comparatively are more extent rather than any other society or culture.

Women of aboriginal groups, although despite their challenges have been playing important role in livelihood and other socio-economic activities.

This paper has been dealing with the role being played by women of aboriginal groups, more familiar as Tribal women in Agri and farming activities for their livelihood and initiative has been taken to highlight how the role has been neglected.

Key words: aboriginal group, dominance, suppression, superior culture, livelihood.

Introduction

Women have always been struggling for their identity. The scenario is almost the same in today's globalised world. In case of tribal women the situation is worse. Different census reports reveal that schedule tribe women and girls are more deprived than men. The history depicts that the life of tribal woman was full of pain. They had lots of difficulties to face. Despite all the troubles these tribal women have been playing a great role in the livelihood practices and other socio - economic activities, which is equal and sometimes superior to their male counter parts. The journey starts from their home as a good homemaker and continues in the field of work for agri - farming activities as a labourer and at the same time they maintain their cultural life as well.

Livelihood pattern of Tribal people

For the people of hills and forests by origin nature was the second mother. These aboriginal groups of people have been depending for everything on Mother Nature. The whole story of their life was well knitted with the elements of nature.

Basically these aboriginal people are agriculturists. Traditionally most of the tribal population practiced 'jhum' or shifting cultivation which was the primary source of livelihood. Hence they were initially called 'jhumias'. 'Jhum' cultivation has intimate

relationship with forest use for habitation and cultivation of areas inside forest. The tribes use to get important supplementary income and inputs in their daily lives. Through 'Jhum' cultivation process they use to produce crops like rice, paddy, corn, millet, mustard, cotton, various vegetables and fruits like carrot, beet, pumpkin, brinjal, garlic, ginger, Greenhill, mushrooms, cucumber, banana, watermelon, grape fruit, pineapple, orange, etc. Bamboo shoot is a popular food item among tribes. Besides this animal husbandry, basketry, horticulture, foraging, fishing and weaving are the subsidiary occupations of the tribes. In recent times they are gradually carrying out plain land cultivation, applying modern cultivation techniques and also they are undertaking various types of jobs in government and private sector.

Role of tribal women in livelihood activities - the days of working :

Apart from performing perfect as a home maker the tribal women also participate in their livelihood practices actively. Since inception the women of aboriginal groups are performing a great role in their cultural, social and economic life as well. Their expertise is equal and sometime more than their male counterparts in terms of standard and utility. In a certain section of tribal communities the tribal men are found to be very idle and loath to any physical labour. So the whole work becomes extra burden on the women of the family.

A day of working starts of the tribal women with household tasks from dawn by spinning and weaving activities for their cloths from the cotton seeds collected from 'jhum' field. The male members of the family use to enjoy deep slumber with the sound of those spinning wheels. Then they go to deep forest for collecting special types of leafs and roots for coloring the threads from which they prepare their cloths. This is simply an economic activity. In the early morning after finishing the cooking for entire family, they start for collecting eatable fruits, vegetables, roots, green leafs from the forest.

In 'jhum' or shifting cultivation process both men and women were engaged but the maximum effort was done by the tribe women. The men used to cut and fire the jungle on the hilly tracks. Then rest of the work is done by the women. They clean the parched ends and ashes from the place and prepare it for cultivation. They do all the task of sowing seeds, pruning and maintaining the plants and cutting and picking up the crops and harvests. They were also engaged in taking care of the animal husbandry. They use to take the livestock to pasturelands. Paying attention to these domestic animals was a time taking and laborious exercise. They are the vendors of their agri- farm produces. These tribe women create unorganized market nearby their place. Sometime they go far away from their hilly native place in search for a populous area so that they find customers to sell their produces.

They were also employed as labors to the 'jhum' field owned by others and did well just like their male counterparts.

Hence the life of tribal women is full of all these activities. They work all the time just like a restless and rare they could find time for themselves. The tribal women are always betrothed in the socio - economic development of their society and they are extremely dedicated to their role.

Status of tribal women - the real scenario :

There is no doubt about the fact that the tribal women have a great and visible role in the socio - economic activities which help to develop the tribal society as a whole. But when it comes to evaluation and recognition of their enormous role; the reality gives a confusing picture which is quite upsetting and depressing at the same time. Because the one side of the coin shows that the tribal women enjoys much better social status than their non-tribal counter parts as the tribal women have no hurry for early marriage .There is no stigma on their widowhood. They can enjoy the freedom of divorce and remarriage. A tribal woman earns in her own way and can get economic independence. But the other side of the coin cries a different story which is bit reverse and painful. Although a tribe women is actively involved in the economic activities but, she is less paid on equal work than her male counter parts which is highly disappointing and objectionable. The division of work is highly loaded against the tribal women. She also bears the yoke of all house hold works. The importance of tribal women in their society is significant because of the fact that they work hard almost relentlessly and the family economy and management depend on them. But this important role of the tribal women is very shoddily neglected. They are just treated like the duty dolls and it is assumed that all their performance in every scope do not require any evaluation and rewards. The independence said to be given to the tribe women becomes meaningless when they remain silent workers only with their unrecognized role towards the economy and society. It is daunting that these earning tribal women are not empowered to take decision both inside and outside of her family. She was not entitled to own her ancestral property. After the death of her husband the ownership of property and headship of the family transferred to any of the male member of the family ignoring her simply, but the responsibility was being imposed to her. The tribal women cannot hold the office of the priest in certain tribal communities, she cannot be allowed to enter into the temple or attend any communal worship. She is not allowed to touch the plough or participate in the roofing of the house.

The pathetic part of the story is that these duty puppets are often used as slaves who are suppose to serve natural satisfaction to their male counterparts and also support the family economically to reduce the worries of daily livelihood uncertainties, so that the male members can enjoy with their friends and sip the 'Chu-Aak', an addictive drink which is prepared by the tribe women by sweating their brows in a day after day process.

Obstacles - challenges to be overcome :

The whole tribal community is suffering from various barriers in the path of their development. Generally women use to face uncountable problems to be successful in their way. Being an undeveloped society the pain of problems of tribal women is not much highlighted and not even audible to the world properly.

The main obstacles are lack of education and awareness which is prohibiting the tribal women in securing a real recognition of their role and identity.

The low rate of literacy among tribal women is a severe threat in today's world. Due to lack of awareness they don't even know and understand the importance and of their awakening to take a position in the advanced world which left them far behind. This is the need of the hour.

Due to low self esteem they are not coming ahead, not getting the appropriate channel for expressing their ability and views.

Their own cultural and customary laws are creating hindrances in the road way to their development. They are unable to cope up with this changed world because of their unwillingness to take up mixed culture.

Tribal population suffers a lot due to their language problems also :

Most of them live in hilly areas from where they have to go a long way to marketise their agri-produces and they are detached from the developed society also.

Being a women that too almost uneducated and unaware of the recent trends these tribe women are several time being deprived by the customers. Maximum of the time they are getting low price and have to face a huge bargaining in the market. They are also subjugated by their male co-sellers in the market place.

Early marriage and over burden of the family work still is the common scenario of tribal society.

Conclusion :

A changing scenario is being observed in the tribal society now days. Due to various Government supports and educational movements the literacy rate is growing and education is spreading its light in the dark corners of their lives. The role of 'Janasiksha samity' for universal education of tribal people and National Literacy Mission is of great importance in this case in India. But miles to go still in this developmental process.

Now a days the tribal women's participation is growing day by day in every sector of employment and economic activities which prove that they are capable and dedicated to perform the responsibility assigned to them. What they need is proper recognition, reward and motivation time to time.

An appeal

Despite various help and support from Government level the problem of tribal women can't be solved if they don't get support from their own tribe community. The successful and rich section of tribal society should come forward to help the undeveloped zones. They should motivate them with the live examples and success stories of their own life. Because being the people of same community and speaking the same language they would be able to reach them and convince them smoothly and hastily in comparison to the non-tribe people. If the male counterparts of aboriginal group are made understood that if they do not promote their better half and first wheel of their society neither they will be benefited nor the tribal society will overcome from the challenges it is facing since inception and they will remain undeveloped forever.

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Changing Faith, Changing Livelihoods:

Transformation of Darchawi Village in North Tripura through Pineapple cultivation

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The emergence of Darchawi village near Kumarghat in Unukuti District, Tripura is closely related with the advent of Christianity to the Darlongs and the Pineapples were like Manna for sustenance of the inhabitants. There is a beautiful story about this village as to how it had come into existence and the economic activities taken up by the villagers.

Prior to 1919, the Darlongs (formerly known as Kukis) were animists. They did not worship the sun or the moon or any of the forces of nature. But they believed that the hills, the streams and the trees are inhabited by various demons or evil spirits. These are known as Ritla/Huai. Those inhabiting in the water being called TuiRitla/Huai and those residing on land being known as Ram Huai. These spirits were uniformly considered as evils, and all the troubles and ills of life were attributed to these evil spirits. The Darlongs believed in one Supreme Being called Pathian who is omnipotent and omnipresent. They performed various sacrifices, mainly killing of cock to appease evil spirits who caused harm very often and also worshipped good spirit for asking good fortune and blessing. Thus it appears that there were some elements of polytheism in their religious belief. The religious life of the Darlongs was also connected with taboos and superstitions. Traditionally, the Darlongs were semi-nomadic tribes and shifting cultivators. Many of their traditional values, culture, songs, dances and hunting activities revolved around the cycles of shifting cultivation, known as 'Loi' (jhum).

But sweeping change had taken place in the Darlong community in 1919 onwards when the Darlongs started embracing Christianity. If fact, it was the turning point in the history of the Darlongs. This changing faith and belief system had also meant changing the livelihoods and social relationships. The Darlong people who embraced Christianity began to have their own governance system centred on the norms of the Church and democratically selected/elected village council, leaving behind the traditional social norms dictated by the local chief called 'Lal'. When more and more Darlong people started embracing Christianity, the village chief or Lal too gradually became non-entity and by mid-1940s the power of chiefs practically became irrel-

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evant among the Darlongs who became Christians and moved away to new villages where the traditional chiefs could not exercise any authority. All the Darlongs have since embraced Christianity and the Darlongs are now contemplating to celebrate Gospel centenary in 2019 in all Darlong villages to commemorate 100 years of coming of Christianity among the Darlong people.

As the outcome of the Jampui Presbytery meeting held in 1918, the Mizo Church leaders decided to send a few native missionaries to the Darlong areas at Saidara (Now Saidachera) under Kumarghat sub-division where there were huge concentration of the Darlongs. At that time there were numerous Darlong villages such as Hrawma's village and many others. All villagers were the subjects of Raja Ngursailiana Thangur, Kuki Chief. Of course, presently there is no existence of any Darlong village in this area. As a back drop of Presbytery meeting, in 1918, eight native missionaries under the leadership of Evangelist Zatuaha came to Saidara to spread the Gospel or preach the Bible in 1919. The Gospel was preached in a big way. In response to it, 14 persons embraced Christianity in the same year. And, Gospel was spread like wild fire without any obstruction and problem to all villages under Saidara. By 1920 Darlong people could sing Christian devotional songs which were taught by the Evangelists.

Emergence of Darchawi village:

The vision of Evangelist Zatuaha, native missionary was to set up a new village where only Christians by faith would live together and worship the living God together without disturbances from other non-Christian Darlongs. His vision might have been the same as the Mizo Raja Hrawngvunga Sailo (Christian) of Phuldungsei, Jampui. The Raja also set up a new village Tlangsang where only Christian Mizos could reside. Thus Evangelist Zatuaha prayed to God so that they could identify God's chosen area as a new village for settlement. At that point of time, most of the Darlong villages were situated only in the western side of Deo River (the Darlongs call it Nelkang tuipui) including Blue hills (Kala tilla) and Rangrung areas. There was one village called RamdingPa's village in the western side of present day Betchera Darlong village, inhabited by non-Christian Darlongs. And the other nearest village of Darlong was at Lalvana's village, near Mausali, Kanchanbari. All the villagers were non-Christian Darlongs. No one ever thought that the location of the new village would be across the Deo River, in the eastern side.

In order to find out a new location, a small team headed by Evangelist Zatuaha prayerfully set off for unknown destination for reconnaissance and crossed over Deo River. The team conducted search for the probable area from one place to another and halted nights, and continued to ask God in prayer. Finally, the team spotted the present location and found to be the most suitable area and lastly selected the place on the ground that the area had abundant natural water sources which will be sufficient to cater the requirement of water for the present and future inhabitants.

On 23.01.1923, Evangelist Zatuaha and 6 (Six) others from the area of Saidara set off for the new location to settle in the new village. On arrival at the new location, they named it DARCHAWI (Raise the Bells). They proclaimed and said, "Let this village be called God's chosen village". They believed that the first seven persons who came to settle were also God's chosen persons for extension of His kingdom. Other Christians living in other villages were also attracted to come to the new village. There was a village called Zawngkhawtlang where the chief was Lalsutkhama. In that village Christians were harassed and persecuted in different way by instigation of Chief Lalsutkhama. The Chief said that no Christian by faith would be able to reside in his village and they might migrate to other village if they wished to do so. Following such intimidation, eight families migrated to Darchawi.

On setting up the village, the villagers made certain Code of conducts for all the inhabitants of the new village. Some of the code of conducts were as under:

- a. No non-Christian shall dwell in this village.
- b. No one shall be involved in the intoxicating drinks and drugs. If anyone is found to have indulged in such activity, he/she shall be heavily penalized.
- c. All Christians irrespective of tribes/caste and place of origin shall be allowed to settle in the village.
- d. No one shall practice divination/magic / any supernatural power/ witch craft.

It may be mentioned that every year the villagers of Darchawi observe and celebrate 23rd January as the Founding Day of their village.



Darchawi village today (a photo in 2007 of a gathering for prayer)

Over a period of 80 years, a sea change has taken place in Darchawi village. Christians from different communities such as the Darlongs, Debbarmas, Garos, Lushais, Bengalese, irrespective of caste/creed had settled there. Number of families had increased from 15 in 1923 to over 350 in 2014. The village had produced many educated persons such as IAS/IPS/TCS/TPS, Doctors, Bankers, Teachers, etc. Visitors/Tourists also feel at home when they come to this village. Even today, people found to be indulging in alcohol and other substance abuses are penalized with fines as per customary laws particularly if they cause public nuisance and family disturbance.

Economic activity:

The villagers asked God in praying what type of economic activities they should opt for their survival and for the survival of their off-spring because the tilla land available was meager which would not be sufficient for their sustenance in future. The founders had decided that they would go for horticulture cultivation and plantation. It was strongly believed that the new idea might be inspiration from their Loving God. Immediately, all of them started orange plantation. God blessed them and also blessed the soil. The soil was sufficiently fertile for plantation of orange. They could sell the fruits commercially from 1930 onwards. The quality was very good. Each tree bore fruits so abundantly that trees could not sustain without support. The rate of orange per hundred in 1930 was 50 paise. This amount was considered to be highly economical. The buyers were mostly traders from Kailashahar. The villagers' economy changed unexpectedly as each household could sell thousands of orange each year. Their dependency on Jhum cultivation immediately stopped except small home gardens for vegetable cultivation. All were happy because they were economically sound.

But sadly in the year 1937, the people noticed that the orange trees had started developing unhealthy look. It was detected that the trees had been attacked by some diseases and started decaying. Everyone was up set for such calamity. At the same time they were unable to contact any agency that could help them to address their problems. The Village Council met over the issues and discussed seriously over the future course of action should all the orange plants dried off. By the end of 1937, commercial sale of oranges stopped except sale for local consumption. As the villagers were worried over their livelihoods, the villagers decided to switch over to Pineapple cultivation. After a long discussion in the community meeting, they decided to collect Kew variety pineapple suckers from somewhere to replace their orange orchards. After intense search, they came to know that the suckers were available in the Rupini's village near Panisagar. Accordingly, they sent a few men (volunteers) to Rupini village to collect/purchase pineapple suckers sometime in the year 1937. During those days, there was no state/national high way; the people relied on the traditional jungle foot tracks only. These volunteers first went to Zamtla

village (a Darlong village near Datuichera, Kailashahar) on foot and halted the night. The following day, they left Zamtla for Rupini's Village, Panisagar on foot. Some persons of Zamtla accompanied them to render help. After collection of pineapple suckers as much as they could carry on head-loads, they halted the night at the village of Chorai near Panisagar. The following day, they came to Darchawi on foot. Each of them could carry maximum 50 pieces. The volunteers (9 from Darchawi and 3 from Zamtla village) brought a total of 600 pineapple suckers. The price was @Rs.3/- per hundred suckers. All the pineapple volunteer pioneers have since expired except one Pu Tuahnla F/O Saithankhuma Darlong.

Thus cultivation of pineapples started from 1937. By 1940, the villagers got return for local consumption and reproduction started simultaneously. The suckers were distributed at free of cost to co-villagers who were interested to cultivate. In this way volume of production accelerated rapidly. By 1945, there were sufficient pineapples for local market. From 1950, the areas of market had increased up to Assam. From 1955 to 1982 was the peak period. The production was nearly 20 lakh per year. It has become surplus in the market. Even the NERAMAC factory at Nalkata could not collect 20% of the production; as a result the farmers had to face losses of 30% to 40% every year. However, for many of the families, income started coming from the sale of suckers rather than the fruits. The suckers were purchased by Government Departments and private suppliers to be supplied to various places across the state.

Impacts of pineapple cultivation on the economy and ecology of Darchawi village:

Pineapple cultivation has transformed the life and livelihoods of the Darlong people of Darchawi. The improved economy facilitated them to improve their houses and living standards. But the most significant impacts came from their wise investment in the education of their children. In their endeavour to make their children study well so that they did not need to toil like their parents, in spite of various odds, they sent their children for good and higher education in the state capital Agartala and even outside the state such as in Shillong, Guwahati and New Delhi. As a result Darchawi became a village with one of the highest level of literacy. Today, most of the households from Darchawi village have at least one or more securely employed earning members both in the government and private sectors. Many are occupying respectable position in administration, police service, medical service, education, banking, agriculture, engineering, armed forces, in business as well as in the service of the church as pastors and mission school teachers.

While many of their neighboring tribes continued to do jhum or shifting cultivation, even in mid-1940s, the people of Darchawi had almost completely stopped jhum. Their jhumland were replaced with orange orchards until about 1940s but gradually replaced with pineapple cultivation since 1937-38 onwards. As pineapple

gardens were interspersed with local tree species and other fruit trees (pineapple being somewhat shade-loving species), the landscapes of Darchawi village remain much green and natural. Pineapple cultivation is a model agro-forestry which the people of Darchawi seemed to have practiced 'by default' since the 1940s much before our scientific knowledge on ecological principles became part of sustainable development discourse in this part of the country. Thus, the people of Darchawi had been practicing an environment-friendly sustainable livelihood models through pineapple agro-forestry systems; as a result the village did not experience serious adverse environmental consequences in terms of soil erosion, over depletion of natural resources and water pollution in spite of many fold increase in local population over the decades.

Concluding Remarks:

Pineapple cultivation has brought prosperity and economic changes to the people of Darchawi. Pineapple economy has contributed much to their wellbeing and improved quality of life. Learning from Darchawi village, many other Darlong people from other villages have also taken up pineapple cultivation. The parents from Darchawi village have been happy that many of their children managed to settle well with secured employment with the various departments and agencies of the government. However, most parents who depended so much on pineapple-based economy and improved livelihoods are also in dilemma. The generations that have nurtured pineapple are now gradually ageing and dwindling, so also the pineapple cultivation in Darchawi is slowly on the wane. Many of them are nostalgic as the skills they have acquired through their hard labour in pineapple cultivation might not be passed over to their children. The new generations who are educated and have taken up employment based livelihood have no inclination to continue with the pineapple cultivation nor do they have adequate time and skill for pineapple cultivation to take forward. The new generations of Darchawi people have taken up education as their main means of progress rather than farming as their parents did. As Darchawi progressed much in terms of social, educational and economic development since they embraced the new faith (Christianity) in 1919, the people of Darchawi village strongly believe that Darchawi village is God's chosen village.

Reference:

- ❑ Manna was the supernatural or miracle food God showered from heaven to His people the Israelites during their 40-year wandering in the desert after Moses led them out of Egypt as described in the Bible (see Exodus: 16).
- ❑ It is said that the first pineapple suckers to Tripura were brought from Lakhicherra area of Cachar District of Assam, presumably by the traveling Hmar people. It may be mentioned here Rev Dohnuna was a Hmar evangelist who also had contact with the Darlong and other tribal people from Tripura during 1923s or around that period.
- ❑ North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC)

British Relation with Tribal Rulers of Tripura

*Dr. Ruma Bhattacharya,**

From the last period of the Mughal rule till the time of Indian Independence, Tripura was a vast land of plains and hills. And the Maharaja of Tripura used to enjoy a dual status. In Hill Tripura he was the Maharaja and in the plains he was the Zamindar of huge fertile lands (acquired from the Nawab of Bengal) known as Chaklaroshnabad. According to W.W. Hunter Chaklaroshnabad was, "by far the most valuable portion of the Raja's possessions and yielded larger revenue than the whole of his kingdom of Hill Tipperah".

In February, 1761 British Colonial rulers for the first time came in contact with Tripura following military help to be provided to Nawab of Bengal Mir Kashim in his expedition against Krishna Manikya the ruler of Tripura. Though colonial rulers were asked only for military help however later on they gained authority in the plain land known as Chaklaroshnabad. British noticed that the territories being clearly divided into two parts: the hills and plains. And more surprisingly in the hills, the ruler was independent; but in the plains (Chaklaroshnabad), He was a Zamindar under the Nawabs of Bengal. And it was through this Estate of Chaklaroshnabad that the British came to dominate over the affairs of Tripura State. After the conquest of Chaklaroshnabad by the British force in 1761 A.D. the revenue from this huge fertile land was fixed at Rupees one lakh and one sicca for the first year. From the hills no revenue was collected. It is important to narrate elaborately the history of Chaklaroshnabad to understand British relation with Tripura.

Chaklaroshnabad is a huge fertile land comprising territories of Noakhali, Tipperah, Sreehatta/Sihet and Brahmanbaria. Once it was part of Tripura kingdom, but after the attack of Mir Habib it became the zamindari of Maharaja of Tripura. And after independence it became part of East Pakistan or present Bangladesh which is in fact a great loss for Tripura in particular and India in general. It was a permanently settled estate, with an area of 570 sq miles, belonging to the Raja of Hill Tippera, situated in the Eastern Bengal Districts of Tippera and Noakhali, and in the Assam District of Sylhet. The estate originally formed part of the state of Hill Tippera, which came into possession of the Mohammadans in 1733. The Mohammadans never troubled themselves about the hills, but they assessed the plains to revenue, and the East India Company followed their example. The revenue assessed at the permanent

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settlement in 1793 was Sicca Rs. 1, 39, 676. At the request of the Raja, the estate was brought under survey and settlement in 1892-99, and the final report supplies complete information regarding it. Excluding the portion in Sylhet, which was not surveyed, the area measured was 558 sq. miles of which 401 were cultivated, 39 cultivable waste, and the rest was made up of uncultivable lands and water; 517 Sq miles were rent paying, and of this area 252 sq miles were held direct by ryots, 208 sq miles by tenure-holders with variable rents, and the balance by tenure-holders at fixed rents. The population of the estate in 1891 was 467,000 or 837 persons per sq mile. The Settlement increased the rental of the estate from 5.84 lakhs to 6.76 lakhs, or by 16 percent, the cost of the operations being 5.28 lakhs or Rs. 1-8 per acre.

Like other parts of India there was quarrel among the royal family members. During the reign of Dharma Manikya Jagat Ram (the great grandson of Maharaja Chhatra Manikya) invaded Tripura with help of Mir Habib (the Dewan of Neoabat of Dhaka) and Aka Saddak (zamindar of Baldakhal) seeking permission from Suja Uddin Kha the then Nawab of Bengal. In the war which took place at Comilla, Dharma Manikya was defeated and took shelter in his kingdom at Hilly Tripura. Therefore Dharma Manikya though lost Zamindari of Chaklaroshnabad but His kingdom at Tripura Hills remained intact.

Therefore though Mir Habib declared Jagat Thakur as the Raja of Tripura and was conferred the title of Raja Jagat Manikya by the former but in reality he gained hold of only the plain lands for which he needed to give the Nawab of Bengal an annual revenue of rupees 92, 993. The Nawab was pleased and conferred the title of 'Bahadur' to Dhaka's Deputy Murshid Kuli II and enlisted Mir Habib's name among the aristocratic groups of people. Suja Uddin named the plain land of Tripura as Chaklaroshnabad and convert it into a zamindari land of Maharaja of Tripura in lieu of an annual revenue to the Nawab of Bengal. J.G. Cunningham said, "The tract then settled thus, corresponds with the present estate of Roshnabad, for the Mughals, as before, left the hilly portion alone". 'Chakla' means circle and 'Roshnabad' means land of light.

Though Jagat Manikya became Zamindar of Chaklaroshnabad but he could not gain hold of the kingdom at Hilly Tripura. Therefore he couldn't hold the status for a very long time.

As mentioned earlier while he was the zamindar of chaklaroshnabad Dharma Manikya was the Maharaja of Hill Tripura. He went to Murshidabad and explained this peculiar situation with help of Jagat Sheth. Nawab was pleased enough to give zamindari of Chaklaroshnabad to Dharma Manikya instead of Jagat Manikya. The Maharaja had to give an annual revenue to the Nawab. Thus Chaklaroshnabad which was once part of administrative system of Tripura, became separate zamindari of the Maharaja for which he needed to give annual revenue to the nawab of Bengal. Since

then the kings of Tripura had two status: in Hilly Tripura he was independent king while in Chaklaroshnabad he was zamindar under the Bengal nawab.

After Dhara Manikya's death His brother became ruler of the state and he adopted the title of Mukunda Manikya. During his rule there were internal quarrels among the royal family members regarding the throne of Tripura. After Mukunda Manikya the rulers of Tripura were weak and incapable. Taking advantage of this situation Shamser Gazi snatched power from rulers of Tripura at first in Chaklaroshnabad and then at Hill Tripura. In return he used to pay high amount of revenue to the nawab of Bengal. But during Mirkashim's period nawab removed Shamser Gazi from the throne of Tripura on charges of anarchy, captured and killed him and then enthroned Krishna Manikya to the royal gaddi of Tripura.

But after sometime dispute started between nawab of Bengal and Krishna Manikya the ruler of Tripura over the question of amount of revenue to be collected from Chaklaroshnabad. Fouzdar of nawab asked for extra military help from nawab to invade Tripura. During this period colonial rulers established their administrative set up at Chittagong on 8th Nov., 1760, under authority of Mr. Verelest. nawab requested British Governor Vansittart to provide military aid to his Foujdar in his attempt to send expedition against Krishna Manikya. Accordingly Mr. Verelest sent military aid under Lt. Mathews to help nawab's army.

Under such circumstances interestingly Krishna Manikya the Maharaja of Tripura instead of surrendering to the nawab of Bengal had surrendered to the British. E.F. Sandys remarked, " he (Krishna Manikya) had only escaped from the cruel claws of the Mughal tiger to fall into the rapacious jaws of the English lion ". A treaty was signed by which king agreed to give annual revenue for zamindari of Chaklaroshnabad to British which he earlier paid to the nawab. In return British Govt. agreed not to interfere in kings rule in his kingdom at Hilly Tripura.

The colonial rulers were not willing to interfere in the internal affairs of the king in the hilly areas not because of generosity, it was due to the reason that the hilly region they found unprofitable as it was a barren land surrounded by primitive tribes. "Indeed the hills were left undisturbed not because the company sought to 'conciliate the Rajah' or show 'generosity to a foe in their power,' as indicated by Halliday, but because these were not profitable. Then, the Company was, to some extent, apprehensive of the tribes inhabiting the hills' of whom nothing was known.' Therefore in the settlement with the Raja no reference was made to the hills. Hence the hills became known as "Independent Tripura". A British revenue Collector named Marriot was sent to enquire into the resources of the country who found the hilly part of the land covered with jungles and inhabited by people who knows nothing and used to remain unclothed. A. Mackenzie explained the revenue collector's observation of the plains of Tripura in the following words,

"The paying part of Tipperah lay on the plains and appeared in the Mohammedan revenue roll as pergunnah Roshnabad. For these of course a settlement was made. We found it a zamindari ,and as such we treated it." About the revenue collectors observation of the hills Mackenzie said, "But of the barren hills.....we took no cognizance. Covered with jungle and inhabited by tribes of whom nothing was known, save that they were uncouth in speech and not particular as clothing The Rajah claimed to exercise authority within them, but did not...seemed, derive much profit from them. Thus till 1860s British Government did not interfere in the affairs of the Maharaja's administration in the hills." compared to other native states, Tripura was fortunate that some more interference did not take place. Though it was completely at the mercy of the British Government , it must be said that at least up to early 1860s , the British Government gave its due recognition as an independent state. Even as late as 1861 Rajas of Tripura received assurance from the colonial Government about their policy of non intervention in the affairs of the state. "..... indeed, there was very little interference up to that period. The British Government was yet to formulate a definite policy towards it because of its insignificance as a state.

Though the British Government followed the policy of neutrality and non intervention administrative affairs of the Hilly Tripura for a century but slowly a change came in their policy especially noticeable during the late sixties of the 19th century when the Lt Governor of Bengal suggested the Govt. of India to use the words 'Hill Tipperah' instead of 'Independent Tipperah' saying that the territory though not subject to the jurisdiction of the Courts, was not politically independent. This suggestion was approved in the Resolution of the Government of India No. 237, dated 26 September, 1866. Thus the traditional independence of Tripura was scrapped off overnight. For this no justification was provided to the king. This was a unilateral decision of the strong over the weak. Clearly in violation of the Royal proclamation, that the rights, dignity and honour of the princes would be respected."

Moreover during the same period the Nazrana Resolutions of 1870, March, 30, of Government of India were published which stressed on the point that as 'Hill Tipperah' was not an Independent territory, the rulers of Tripura would henceforth be subject to Nazrana rules, according to which if the ruler had a successor the nazar or tribute to be paid to the Govt. at the time of succession, which would be half of the annual revenue of the State; in all other cases, the 'nazar' would be one year's revenue.

During the last half of the same year the Government decided to appoint an Agent in Tripura due to the fact that "the Raja was in the habit of sending expeditions against the Kookies, who retaliated by raids into our territories, that we had no proper means of knowing what goes on in Tipperah; and that it is absolutely essential to prohibit the Raja from making war upon the tribes"

According to A. Mackenzie, Junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal, "The object of the appointment of the Agent should be clearly explained to the Raja. He should be told that while it is not the intention of the Government to interfere in the detailed management of his hill possession, the present anomalous state of things under which a British subject exercises absolute and entirely uncontrolled authority in a tract of country surrounded by British territory can no longer be permitted."

The political Agent was instructed that "without directly interfering he should watch the proceedings of the Tipperah Courts, and bring to notice any acts of outrage, injustice, or barbarity ... he should counsel the Raja in regard to the reforms which suggested themselves as absolutely necessary..."

Thus British interference in Tripura started through their political Agents who used to dominate the Maharaja by various ways. For example in 1889 (August) under instructions from Lt. Governor of Bengal the officiating political agent R.T. Greer visited Tripura with advise for Birchandra Manikya, the Maharaja of Tripura for reform measures on certain special issues. It was decided that in consultation with the political agent, the Maharaja should appoint a Minister and a manager for five years for full administrative powers of the state and for Maharaja's Zamindaries respectively. During the five years the minister and manager would supply information about the state as well as Maharaja's zamindary to the political agent. And "should the dismissal of the Minister and the Manager become necessary, the measure will be carried out by the Maharaja in consultation with the political Agent."

Maharaja Birchandra Manikya was dissatisfied about this British intervention in his administrative affairs by creating pressure. He in letter to the Lt. Governor of Bengal in 1889 (September, 27) expressed his opinion that the proposal of Mr. Greer will result sooner or latter in the total loss of his independence and that Mr. Greer should not ... have insisted on him accepting the proposals, even provisionally, without allowing him adequate times.

He at last agreed to sign the memorandum fearing that a refusal might displease the Lt. Governor of Bengal which might be construed with disloyalty towards the British Government.

In spite of Maharaja's grievance expressed in writing to the Lt. Governor of Bengal the Maharaja was forced to appoint an Assistant Political Agent, Umakanta Das, as minister of the State, with almost full powers in 1890. And interestingly, after two and a half years when the Maharaja wanted the resignation of the agent and issued dismissal order, the minister continued administering the State claiming that the Maharaja could not do so without permission of the Bengal Government.

Ultimately the Maharaja had to withdraw his dismissal order. However lastly at Comilla Durbar in 1892 the maharaja met Lt. Governor who agreed to withdraw Umakanta Das, in return of which the Maharaja was asked to submit annual

administrative reports to the Government . Moreover the Maharaja should pay a visit to the commissioner of Chittagong at Comilla whenever he would visit the place to supply all necessary information.

Thus "The Comilla Durbar was shrewdly organized to wiring concessions and to bring the State to a position hardly tenable with the concept of independent status." In short from time to time the British Government in a very planned manner reminded the Maharaja that they can no longer be treated as independent. In the Arms Act Rules published by the Hill Tipperah Durbar as the maharaja used the word 'Swadhin Tripura' (Independent Tripura) the Magistrate and ex-officio political Agent, T.Emerson wrote to the minister of State reminding that the use of the word 'Swadhin Tripura' (Independent Tripura) has been used The use of the word 'Swadhin' (Independent) to describe the State appears to be contrary to the orders of the Bengal Government..."

Besides losing Independence the State lost almost half of its territory mysteriously which even astonished the British. Till last half of 1857, the area of the State was admittedly 7,632 sq. miles and its eastern boundary being identical with western limits of Burmah. (Major Rennel's map of Bengal, 1781, corroborated this, as did Thornton's Gazetteer of 1857.

However during the Lushai Expedition of 1871-72, the eastern boundary was pushed to the Longai river on the west and a notification was issued to that effect on 13 June, 1874, which resulted in a loss of territories which brought down its area to half.

The Lushai had not been wrested from the rulers of Tripura by right of conquest; but gradually absorbed in British India . It appears from the utterances of the then Political Agents and the Commissioners of Chittagong that the Longai boundary was merely a provisional 'Inner Line of Defense'. But the tract was not restored to the State on the ground that the Lushai troubles were not over. The situation continued till 1900, when the Government of India issued a notification, without knowledge of the Tripura Durbar, confirming the Longai river as the western boundary of the Lushai Hills District.

A question might arise why the British Government though unwilling to annex any portion of the hilly Tipperah during initial stage, became so much willing in gaining that part in the later stage. As per John Edgar's notes (who undertake a tour among Lushais in 1871) the British Government, coming under pressure from the tea planters and missionaries, annexed a large tract of territory of the State. While the tea planters were strongly against transfer of the territory the missionaries objected transfer of territory on the ground that they would not be allowed a free hand in the kings' territory.

The rulers of Tripura (from Birchandra Manikya to Bir Bikram Manikya) strongly

objected against British domination and expressed their opinions to the British Government to protect their status, dignity and territorial integrity. But the British Government didn't give a hear to their requests.

In spite of that the rulers of Tripura maintained their loyalty towards Imperial power because upon it depends their very existence. But in the process they had to suffer humiliation though in some cases they received concessions, such as - the 13 Gun Salutes, the title of hereditary Maharaja, or the Sanad of hereditary Succession. But whenever the imperialist interest were affected, they didn't compromise, as was the case with Lushai lands. The Tripura Durbar repeatedly objected to this boundary in 1890, 1891, 1897, 1905, 1913 and 1919. There were several other protests and representations between 1891 and 1897.

The kings were dissatisfied with British Government seeing the great difference between what they declared as policies and what they practiced in reality. As an example in 1870 Birchandra Manikya was asked to use the title 'raja' instead of Maharaja on the ground that 'the proper title of the Hill Tipperah Chief is 'Raja' and not 'Maharaja' and that by that title " the Chief of Hill Tipperah is to be addressed in future in official correspondence." Birchandra replied that he himself had conferred the title of Raja to some of his tribe Chiefs, and therefore, his proper title should be 'Maharaja' and that , in the Printed List of the Government of Bengal, published in 1870, he was entered as a 'Maharaja.' But the Government bluntly told that "it was clearly by a mistake that the present chief was entered as Maharaja in that list..." The Government added a further insult saying that, "Whether or not at any future date the Government of India may be pleased to confer the higher title of Maharaja on him must depend on the Rajah's own conduct and the approval of the Government of Bengal on the administration of his State."

Ultimately Birchandra Manikya received the higher title of Maharaja by proving his absolute loyalty to the British Government by contributing generously to the celebration held at Comilla on the occasion of the assumption of the title of 'Empress of India' by Queen Victoria.

And by organizing a grand Durbar at Agartala on the same occasion. His display of loyalty so much impressed Lord Lytton, the Viceroy, that in his report to the Secretary of State for India, in Aug 1877, he stated : "... the Rajah of Hill Tipperah personally superintended arrangement of the Durbar held at his capital, and evinced much pleasure at having such an opportunity of testifying his fidelity to the British Government..."

But such display of loyalty to the British Government should not be constructed as reconciliation to the British rule. It was but a plot adopted by the princes of India to preserve temnants of their tradition against a much superior force. But in their minds they however had grievances against this dominating attitude of the imperial-istic Government.

The grievances of the rulers of Tripura against the colonial Government found expression in a strictly confidential memorandum submitted to the Director, Special Organization by the Chamber of Princes, by the last ruling prince of Tripura Bir Bikram Manikya in 1928 which contained a long list of various humiliations (as mentioned in the above) suffered by various rulers of Tripura under British domination.

Thus during the sixties of eighteenth century British rulers for the first time came in contact with Tripura. Initially they were interested in the affairs of huge fertile plain lands known as Chaklaroshnabad, but later on they extended their influence over the affair of Hill Tripura. The Maharaja's of Tripura at that point of time enjoyed dual status of a king and a zamindar. More clearly, in hill Tripura he was the king and in the plain land or Chaklaroshnabad they were zamindars. The colonial rulers at initial stage were interested in the affairs of Chaklaroshnabad. The Hill region they found barren and surrounded by primitive tribal groups. Therefore they followed the policy of neutrality and non-intervention in Hill Tripura. Slowly during the sixties of 19th century a change came in their policy. Since then they suggested rulers to use the terms Hill Tripura instead of Independent Tripura. Moreover the colonial rulers were against using the title of 'Maharaja' by the rulers of Tripura. Moreover, the Government also decided to appoint an Agent in Tripura which they thought essential to protect the Raja from making war upon the tribes and to bring into notice any acts of outrage, injustice or barbarity. Therefore Political Agent was instructed to council the Maharaja on such lines without directly interfering in the detailed management of the hill possession. In 1890 Maharaja of Tripura was pressurized to appoint an Asstt Political Agent in Tripura named Umakanta Das, minister of the State with almost full powers. Thus British interference started through their political Agents, who used to dominate the native rulers in various ways. Though the native rulers like Birchandra Manikya, Radha Kishore Manikya, Birendra Kishore Manikya had grievances in their minds against dominating attitude of imperialistic powers, but they maintained their loyalty towards imperial power because upon it depended their very existence.

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TRIBAL ORAL LITERATURES OF TRIPURA: **CREATING A CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC SPACE**

*Dr. Archita Gupta**

ABSTRACT:

This paper is an attempt at comprehending the language ,literature and literacy of different tribal communities of Tripura and the 'constructedness' of knowledge system. The absence of tribal history, language and literature has been examined keeping in view the cultural and linguistic imperialism resulting from the hierarchy of privileged -royal and underprivileged-mass.The focus of this paper is on the promotion of oral tradition form of tribal cultures as an attempt at resisting the process of annihilation of the root culture and corresponding language which runs the risk of fading into extinction. The revival, promotion and analysis into the process of telling, writing and translating /re-writing of Tribal oral practices of Tripura such as folk tales ,proverbs ,folksongs, et al of Tripura ,therefore is an attempt to comprehend the tribal culture and language.This paper also tries to emphasize the process of translation of tribal oral folk texts as an attempt at intercultural mixing explicating the source culture.

KEYWORDS: Oral literature, hierarchy , culture, knowledge, translation.

Literature and literacy of any particular language are interlinked with social ,cultural and political power relation. Knowledge is socially produced and socially stratified and therefore there is a politics of knowledge: who produces, controls, disseminates and about whom? Tripura, with its heterogeneous co-existence of tribal and non-tribal offers a ground of analysis into the process of constructedness of knowledge through cultural and linguistic hegemonisation and hierarchy formation. Chandrakanta Murasingh in "The World of Folk Literature:Kokborok" comments that during "the long years of princely rule , Kokborok suffered the worst neglect. Although it was the mother tongue of the rulers, the Maharajas felt ashamed of speaking the language of the poor common subjects and of the near-naked hill people practicing Jum. In the absence of recognition over a deplorably long period of time , a script acceptable to everyone has not yet been developed."(Murasingh,

6).Owing to this the promotion of oral tradition form of tribal cultures can be interpreted as an attempt at resisting the process of annihilation of the root culture and corresponding language which runs the risk of fading into extinction. Its reliance on local elements is an effort at de-contamination, a process of freeing the root culture from the pervasive influence of dominant alien cultures and language. Orality is not a universal, general situation; it is linked to physical, cultural, and material contexts that are different for different cultures. Orality can be treated as a component of a specific social space, with its own particularities of gender, class, sexuality and politics. As a popular literature form they provide a grounded and spontaneous mode of expression of a particular space moving towards creating a 'locale' as opposed to 'global'. The very fact that the oral narrators are not telling about their own time and life but about their particular culture, region and race hints at a collective consciousness of a special group or region. The revival, promotion and analysis into the process of telling, writing and translating /re-writing of Tribal oral practices of Tripura such as folk tales ,proverbs ,folksongs, et al of Tripura ,therefore is an attempt to comprehend the source culture and language. It has a social and cultural significance because of the state's status as a culturally amorphous region, the influx of non-tribal culture and subsequent domination , its translation/transformation from oral to linguistic text giving rise to question of domination and subordination of language , and being a part of a 'locale' that itself has experienced a hierarchy first of royal(privileged-centre)-folk (underprivileged-margin). This paper attempts at exploring how oral literatures of Tripura as cultural 'texts' create a regional, cultural and linguistic space through its depiction of an uncontaminated/lost 'local' with its myth, legends, customs, belief system, taboo, et al and in the process constructs a counter canon of literature as well as literacy.

The focus or emphasis on oral/popular literature in imparting knowledge on source/root culture and language is primary because of its penetrability and ability to disseminate as well as its ground/base in its root culture and language. 'Oral literature' may seem a contradiction in term if we trace the origin of the term literature. 'Literature' from the Latin 'litterae' (meaning letters), suggests primacy of writing. But orality can be the central mode in 'writing'/affirming history, culture and language of a land/region that strives to resist annihilation. In this case it is not a binary of orality and literacy but of orality in literacy. Oral traditions do not have a single unified 'author'. In oral storytelling forms, the author is less a person than the context of enunciation and performance and such forms are collective . When the aim is to develop a marginalised(?) literary , literacy and cultural position , local folklores, proverbs, riddles and myths et al are relied upon and used extensively. In case of Tripura when an urgent necessity arose to develop a local language the forms and contents of local folk texts were used. In 1954 Sudhanya Debbarma published a monthly newspaper Katakathma (New Story). 'Fumuk Mung' (riddles) were

regularly published by Jyotilal, Ratimanik and Ruchirung Devi. In the same year Sudhir Krishna Debbarman wrote Kaktang, a book to teach Tripuri language¹. The book was written in the form of rhyme for quick comprehension of the language:

Aang ami nung tumi narag tumra

Chung amra ba se barag tahara

('Aang' means ami, 'nung' means you 'narag' means you (in the plural sense). 'Chung' means we, 'Ba' means he and 'barag' means they). It is pertinent here to mention that because of the lack of knowledge in Kokborok language the translations of such texts have been examined in this paper.

Any social scheme involves the question of exclusion and inclusion. The formation of canon is always based on a hierarchy of dominant and subordinate. The documented history of a region is accompanied with some obscurity and half visibility, and this obscurity in fact, facilitates the canonical history formation that involves the politics of exclusion and inclusion. Oral folk texts often amounts to myth. Here it is important to draw a line of demarcation between history and myth. They represent alternate ways of looking at the past. History requires the presence of writing in order that concerning versions of the past may be recorded and evaluated. On the other hand, myth as a space excludes writing and literacy. Myth is cited when a situation in the present needs to be understood as a consequence of the past. As far as history of Tripura and its language and literature are concerned, it needs to be analysed/investigated on the light of folk culture and folk literature as reading non-canonical texts would highlight the beliefs, codes and customs of the region as well as the conflicts and the process of exclusion that mark the knowledge system and canon. Attempts have been made in the course of this paper to examine the hierarchy of royal-subject and the subsequent absence/silence of tribal history and language (Although there are different languages of different tribes of Tripura, the Kokborok language is referred in this paper) and how efforts are being made in the literary sphere to 'write' their culture through a practice that has a mass appeal. It is pertinent here to cite the following :

The books collected so far reveals only the story of kings. The discussion on real life patterns of mass (the subjects who are generally of the ethnic tribal stock at that time) is absent. The lifestyle of different tribes, their economic and cultural problems were not included. It is not possible for us to decipher clearly the aspects of mass consciousness until the opinion of the then masses is known. Rajmala or books of this type are based on the history and perspective of the royalty. There is mention of devotion to royalty and severe punishment for disobedience. But there is no mention as to why such devotion is not permanent in the mind of the devotee and periodically erupts in the form of revolution. (Dey 80-81; trans mine).

The hierarchy is here of court/administration and mass/folk. It is said that

language has always been the consort of empire. Together they come into being , together they grow and flower. Ironically the empire -language parameter or more precisely the empire and its relation to the language of its mass has undergone a thorough shift in this region resulting a linguistic imperialism in the form of dominance of Bengali language in court and administration that subsequently ends up in a cultural and social hierarchy of tribal and non-tribal. The kings of Tripura patronized the Bengali community and Bengali language more than their own tribes. Radhakishor Manikya Bahadur wrote to his minister Ramanimohan Chattopadhyay,

It is a matter of pride for a Bengali Hindu state that various attempts have been made for the use of Bengali language in royal official activities and for the development of the language . Specially I love Bengali language more than my life and consider it my prime duty to look into the development of the language..."(qtd in Dey 168. trans and italics mine)

As the paper focuses on the creation of a cultural and linguistic space through the oral literature of Tripura ,exploring the process of translation with multidimensional perspective is significant. The oral literatures as folk tales, songs, proverbs, riddles need to be re-written in order to be 'heard'. There lies the problematic of constructedness of a text as the oral text needs to be 'structured'. If re-writing is not in the source language the process of 'structuring' or re-writing undergo a dual shift of form (oral to written)and language (tribal language to Bengali or English),and what stance should a target language adapt become crucial at this point. The folk text carries the inscriptions of cultural coding in the form of myths,legends, symbols, fantasy and dreams of the source culture. The load of textual assemblages and identities of the source text as deep inscriptions may not be translated in its totality into the target language. This is where translating the oral or folk has its own problems, being hugely different from translating a written text. But when the contextuality (locale) and textuality (oral form) of the folk text need to be disseminated , the target language becomes a medium of intercultural understanding.When a language becomes a tool for cross-cultural understanding, the concept of 'target culture' renders itself as an ambiguity, Here the target language does not correspond to the target culture. If translation of Kokborok oral folk literature into Bengali and English aims to acquaint the Tripuri new generation speaking or writing Bengali and English , the target languages become a tool to come close to the root /source culture. Translation is not an attempt at annihilating or erasing any of the traits of source culture. Translation here attempts to explicate the source culture . Here lies the necessity of understanding the process as an intercultural negotiation. It has put the onus of responsibility on the native translator or someone who bears knowledge on both source/root and target language. Being constituted within his/her language and culture a native translator can avoid the risk of erasure of cultural traits .It can be observed that Kokborok has been facing the threat of extinction mainly owing to the

absence of educational institutions employing the language. The new generation has to attend schools in which the medium of instruction is either Bengali or English. "Nowadays, westernised tribal boys and girls who study in English and Bengali-medium schools do speak Kokborok at home but most of them cannot read or write their mother tongue properly. Unless this trend is reversed, Kokborok will have a tough time surviving," said Murasingh, the author of *Tales and Tunes from Tripura Hills* in which Quaint Kokborok proverbs and myths have been handpicked and compiled in a book that linguists hope will help save the language from fading into extinction. Apart from the 102 proverbs collected during painstaking travels across the hills, Murasingh has also incorporated in his book a hundred simple riddles popular in tribal discourse to rekindle an interest in the language spoken by thirty one per cent of the state's population.

The focal point in folk/oral text is the absence of 'authority' of author and even of narrator/teller (who tells these texts orally) himself/herself -an aspect that highlights the impossibility of tracing the origin of folk texts as well as the importance of the term 'folk'. The very fact that the oral narrators /tellers of the folk texts/oral texts are not telling about their own time and life but about their particular culture and region and race generates/hints at a collectiveness/collective consciousness of a special group or region. Therefore even the person who is documenting the texts in original tongue of these tales or the person who is translating them in the language of other culture is endowed with an commitment and responsibility towards this group and region. The non-intrusive narrator /translator is a recording consciousness, a telling medium that strives for neutrality and transparency . The collector and translator of Tripuri fairytales Kumud Kundu Chowdhury in the Introduction to the first edition of *Kereng Kathma* emphasizes the importance of regional collectiveness -

Tipuri fairytales are not Bengali fairytales. These fairytales are familiar with the Kokborok speaking tribal population of Tripura. Daily, at bedtime the tribal grandmothers tell these pleasing/enchanting tales to their grandchildren in their mother-tongue Kokborok. (KunduChowdhury, 'Introduction' . 7-8, trans and italics mine).

The reference to Bengali fairytales points to the probability of annihilation and contamination of the identity of a regional cultural group by a dominant alien majority group and language .This aspect is even more overtly stated when the translator is talking about his preference for oral texts by female/women narrator over the male/men (eleven tales are collected from women folk out of total Fifteen):

I think the fairytales told orally by womenfolk specially those articulated by elderly women have protected themselves from the influence of outside world's fairytales .The other four tales have been collected very cautiously from male/men .This caution was necessary firstly because the Bengali fairytale *Thakurmar Jhuli* has been entered into the tribal males through the Bengali teller/narrator due to the influx of Bengali refugee, and secondly, recently the newly educated tribal youths have began

to read world's fairytales in Bengali and English. Therefore, there is an acute/immediate possibility of violation of the sanctity of these Tripuri folktales...But I have noticed one thing -some of the fairytales told by the tribal grandmothers or elderly women have been Aryanised . Terms/words like 'munir ashram', 'Brahman', and 'Kalitala' 3, et al have entered.(Ibid, 9, trans mine).

Thus, the oral folk texts from Tripura as a popular literature form are grounded in its socio-cultural milieu .This paper attempts to locate the cultural nuances as well as implied narratives in such texts . At the same time it tries to incorporate within its ambit the reference of myths, folklore , local legends ,customs et al registering /affirming a mode of resistance in the written literary form as poems with their language and content. The folktale "Chethuang"⁴ traces the reason for flat top of chethuang(chatim in Bengalli) tree. It can be termed as etiologic tale that is close to myth. It is used to refer to the descriptions or assignment of causes . Accordingly , an etiologic tale explains the origin of a custom, stalk of affairs, or natural feature in the human or divine world .There are abundant example of such tales in the corpus of Tripuri folk tales.The story on chethuang tree states a social taboo . When a brother, attracted by his own sister's beauty wants to marry her the sister climbs on to a chethuang tree that she has planted. The top of the tree grows higher and higher by her prayer and request:

***'Dada bai ano kainani himwoo,
Log Chethuang log'***

(Oh Chethuang tree, they want to get me married to my brother. You grow more and more)(Tyagi,10).

When her father brings the blood of a black dog saying it her brothers, the girl says,

***'Angba chhiyade angba chug yade;
Chhwila kochhom tan. "***

(I see and know , you brought by cutting a black dog)(ibid, 11)

The story has covert reference to the binary of the civilized and uncivilized pertaining to the social system of tribal. It is believed that incest was not a taboo in earliest societies, it came with the dawning of civilization . This story comes from the days when society had taken up civilized values . The story lends a voice to female character negating male centric bias. Another Tripuri folktale on Hornbill has reference to a female character named Sampari who is active and does all the household work and also in Jhum field while her husband Kachak is lazy and drinks the local brew all through the day. She is not stereotyped as low,timid and dependent women figure.It is indicative of the social system and life pattern of tribes where men and women work together in the Jhum field for livelihood. .Another interesting fact about its re-writing in an alien language is the retention of actual oral

speech . It is an attempt not only to register the culture specificity but also the culture specific language and semantic. Reader who reads the translated version (dual translation of form and language)at least can acquaint with some of the meaning of source language. Such culture specific folk element defies translation and resists transformation of the source culture .

Jamichalang is a folk/ fairy tale hero and a tale on his chivalry is cited in Kereng Kothma where he fights and kills a ferocious demon .His character finds reference in comic strip on chivalrous Reang general Senapati Ray Kachag written and illustrated by Alak Dasgupta.His reference has the connotation of the hierarchy and binary of canonical and non-canonical(here oral/ popular/folk) historiography .The comic strip on Ray Kachag , 'the chivalrous hero of fifteenth century Tripura' 'unheard in the history of Tripura'(Dasgupta, back cover of the book; trans. mine) is non-conventional both in its adaptation of theme and medium and its personages.The comic strip on Ray Kachag is a reconstruction of history concerning oral historical traces in the form of folktales, representation of ethnic life and culture. It is an indirect indictment to the construction of a multilingual, multicultural state hinting the inclusion vis-à-vis exclusion. The linking of documented history in the narrative is a device to create a fictional credibility in the narration. Senapati Ray Kachag is the translation of a folk narrative into mainstream Bengali language, the target language.The comic strip Senapati Ray Kachag consists of five stories nucleating around the chivalry of Ray Kachag as general and his utmost effort to save the kingdom of Tripura- the first is about Kachag's emergence as the leader of the protectors of his own village and his rise to the post of General in the army of King Dhanyamanikya.

The inclusion of Jamichalang is not a figment of the writer-illustrator's imagination presented as fictional reality. The character of Jamichalang is clouded by obscurity as he is a character from folktale. He does not conform to any form of tradition, but is a blend of mythology and folktale and is also a historical as he denies age and time by resisting the prime determiner of canonical and conventional historical documentation viz. chronology. He had saved Kachag and introduced himself smilingly as "yes I am as apt in telling lie as strong. My name is Jamichalang. hee hee" (22, trans. mine). Jamichalang helped Kachag twice-in capturing Thanasigarh in 'Swet Hasti Parba' and in the battle with Husen Shah. Jamichalang is indeed a strange character. He suddenly appears in the scene. He is a folk-tale element in the story and is a well-known character in fairy-tales. He does not wear shoes and in fact, is very much reluctant to do so, does not speak about his age or his origin. He remains obscure till the end and his character is a part of non-canonical history writing and new historiography. He refuses to go to Rangamatia (now Udaipur and the then capital of Tripura). A quarrel is hinted between him and the writers of Rajmala: "tomader rajmalar - lekha krame dekhe felle sarbanash. oder sange amar iye ache, he he he" (26). When Kachag insists on his going, he tells "e khetre kono aaposh noy. Ae:" meaning no compromise here (26. trans. mine,). Rajmala is the record of royal

history and therefore his 'maladjustment' with the writers of the text is hinted at since he defies time, ageing and also established literary and historical tradition of documentation. Jamichalang attempts to elude and delude all such definitive historical traces. He is a part of popular mythology and resists the form of writing that is monolithic, in the process revealing a power equation at play. As cultural tools the folk elements with multilayered connotation/multidimensionality thus create a canon of its own.

The folktale on Nuyai, a mythical bird tells the story of a girl who eats a forbidden/magical vegetable, and unfortunately acts against the norms of society. Scolded by parents and having received male treatment specially by her mother prays to Nuyai king to give her his wings, and thus she becomes a bird and marries Nuyai. In its rewriting to Bengali (in Kereng Kothma) the cultural and linguistic specificity as well as rhythm of the oral folk texts are retained through the rendering of the speech that tries to make the actual tone audible :

Nuayai o Nuayai

Nuyai Raja oi

Aa'n bukurang Kangcha rahardi.(73)

(O Nuayai King, give me one wing)

Folktales of Tripura contain in themselves an insight into the evolution of their society and life pattern. The tale that traces the reason of 'kherenbar bubar' not having any fragrance has reference to 'chamaki kimani', a custom where young men do their service in their would-be father-in-law's house. If he can convince them as a suitable groom by his work parents agree to marry their daughter to him. 'Kok-da sati' (Do not talk) folk tale has the implication of the oppression and exploitation of royal dominance on mass especially womenfolk. In this tale a jhumia's two daughters compared with Mailuma (the goddess of paddy) and Khuluma (the goddess of cotton) by the villagers are forcibly taken away by royal attendants when they hear their whisper from the room where they were kept for protecting themselves from royal attendants. In the next birth they become birds and says to each other kok-da sati (meaning do not talk) recalling their error of previous birth. It can be interpreted as the reminder of the fear as well as the silence of common folk who were relentlessly oppressed but could not protest. The tales also trace the hierarchy existing in the natural and animal world. The trickster figure is popular in folk tales. A small animal triumphs over the so-called 'lords' of the jungle by superior intelligence and survivor's spirit. The tale on the tiger and the tortoise is one such tale. The trickster figure is significant implying and hinting at the possibility of reversal of social hierarchy .

Proverbs of different tribal groups of Tripura reflect social, economic and cultural phenomena of their communities. They are based on experience, help in under-

standing the primitive life of community and are used to retrieve older meanings for contemporary needs. The proverbs also reflect man's bond with nature. The significance of the popular proverb 'Khilong badi mamla takadi'⁵ (meaning it is better to walk on stole/foul thing than to entering into a court case) can be traced back to the history of exploitation and oppression of tribal who were ignorant of law and were always duped being deprived of their own land. Sudhanaya Debbarma's Kokborok novel Hachuk Khuriyo (meaning 'In the Lap of Hill') has reference to such exploitation where a character from the village of Naren (the central character) becomes bankrupt. 'Basumati naianhai ha manya' (meaning If earth is not willing it is difficult to get land) is a proverb indicative of the tribal's respect to land where land is regarded as supreme and worshipped as goddess. Tribals folk songs centered round jhum field also reflect this sensibility and thus these songs work as cultural codes creating a space that forms the core of tribal life. The folk songs on the theme of love are also closely related to jhum. "Pakla tangmani furuni rachar mung" narrates young boy and girl worrying how their parents have got to know about their secret love. "Hunhunmana" is collectively sung in the time of cutting of jhum. The worship of the God Garia has its own song. While bidding farewell to the God, they sing:

'Gariamani Chengrai aama mailuma.....'6

('Oh Ganesha, the God of Riches and Oh Annapurna Laxmi, take our offering as food. Our riches grow with your blessing', trans mine)

It reflects the customs, religion and belief systems of tribal and also focuses on the livelihood pattern of the folk.

Thus the tribal discourse embedded in the oral folk texts of Tripura brings out a sensibility which is not tainted by linguistic and cultural imperialism. Resisting the pervasive influence of global culture their 'writing' and 're-writing' attempt to affirm an uncontaminated regional /'local' space and at the same time create a canon of its own rejecting the imitative mode of writing. This is not to say that the relations between the local cultures and language are of more equalized nature than that between local languages and that of Bengali or English. Unequal power relations inform and have always informed the 'locals'. Similarly the literary forms in local languages (folk texts) and their relationship with the language of the court/administration are all power relation. Therefore the revival and promotion of the folk texts can revive their corresponding languages also. Literature from Tripura in its discourse should generate a consciousness of the land and its people in their totality. Translation should be an intervention to create new texts emphasizing cultural mixing and negotiation. Comprehending the cultural-ritual context in which the folk-text is produced, folk-text-translator should aim to minimize the loss of cultural meaning.

NOTES

1. The information on history of tribal writing is collected from Ramaprasad Datta's "Upajatiya Sahitya Rachana o Sankalan".(pp 51-57) in Saha Dinesh Chandra eds Ramaprasad Dattter Prabhandhamala:Pratham Khanda.Agartala: Writer's Publication,2008.
2. See Datta, Sekhar. "Kokborok treasure dug out from Tripura hills-Sahitya Akademi brings out a book of proverbs and myth compiled by poet Chandrakanta Murasingh".The Telegraph 4 August 2009.7. Print.
3. Munir ashram connotes Hindu sage and his abode while performing Bhramhacharya. Such cultural and religious custom is totally absent in Tripuri culture.Bhrahman is the Bengali for Brahmin, considered to be the upper caste .This term is not rooted /familiar in traditional Tripuri culture as primitive Tribal society was devoid of such class distinction. Kalitala , a Bengali word that can be taken as an another reference to a Goddess associated with Bengali Hindu.
4. The tribal oral folktales of Tripura are translated in different texts in Kokborok, Bengali and English languages. Some of the tales are common with slight variation. This paper has incorporated the tales published in the journal ". Indian Folklife: Tripura Folklore.35(2010)(in English language) and those in D. K Tyagi's Tribal Folktales of Tripura (in English language)and Kumud Kundu Chowdhury's Kereng Kothma (in Bengali). The tale associated with Nuyai bird has some differences in content in Kereng Kothma and Tribal Folktales of Tripura.Here it is necessary to mention that the meaning of the term 'kereng kothma' is different in kumud Kundu Chowdhury and Chandrakanta Murasingh. For KunduChowdhury the probable meaning of 'Kok' is 'Katha'(meaning story or utterance)and of 'Ereng'is 'Alik'(meaning fanciful or imaginative).(See Kundu Chowdhury, Kumud. 'Introduction to First Edition'. Kereng Kothma . Agartala :Akshar Publications, 2013. Pp 2). For Chandrakanta Murasingh in "Kokborok there is a single term for folktales, that is 'kereng kothma'. A kereng is a land tortoise and kothma means a tale. Folktales are therefore , tales of the wild land tortoise, whether there be a tortoise in it or not"(See Murasingh, Chandrakanta "The World of Folk Literature:Kokborok". Indian Folklife: Tripura Folklore.35(2010):pp 7.)
5. Proverbs analysed in this paper is taken from Ajita Tripura essay on Tripuri community "Tripura"(pp 121-152) in Debbarma , Nareshchandra, Biman Dhar and Kumud Kundu Chowdhury eds Tripurar Adibasi: A Collection of Essays on Adibasis of Tripura. Agartala: Tripura Darpan,2013.
6. This paper has taken information on folksongs from Ramaparasad Datta's "Tripuray Upajati Loksangeet" (pp 74-80) in Saha Dinesh Chandra eds Ramaprasad Dattter Prabhandhamala:Pratham Khanda.Agartala: Writer's Publication,2008.

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Forest Resources in Tripura

*Dr. Tripti Majumdar Das**

Natural forest is an important resource and constitutes a balanced man-environment relationship between land and people of the state. Total Forest area in Tripura is 6292.681 sq. km (59.98 %). The forest of Tripura have a tremendous commercial value as a timber building, making fuel for cooking. Even waste wood, clipped and mixed with an adhesive under high pressure to form large flat building boards. Tree felling in some areas has resulted in large scale deforestation, often followed by erosion. In some areas specifically in upland's (Tilla's bottom) foothill area, soil is washed away by heavy rainfall. Except this, there was reckless destruction of forests due to jhuming and unrestricted and unscrupulous felling.

Tripura is one of the eight state in North eastern India adjoining Assam and Mizoram towards North east and east. The state is surrounded by Bangladesh in North west, west and south east. The state of Tripura with a geographical area of 10491.69 sq. km is predominantly hilly and is surrounded on three sides by a deltaic basin of Bangladesh. The state is situated between 22° 56' north to 24° 32' north latitudes and 91° 09' east to 92° 21' east longitude with tropic of cancer passing through it.

Physiographically, Tripura is divided into three broad distinct landforms pattern. They are- hill ranges, tillas(high lands) and lungas(low land) or alluvial valleys. The landform pattern is shown in the Fig. 1 below.

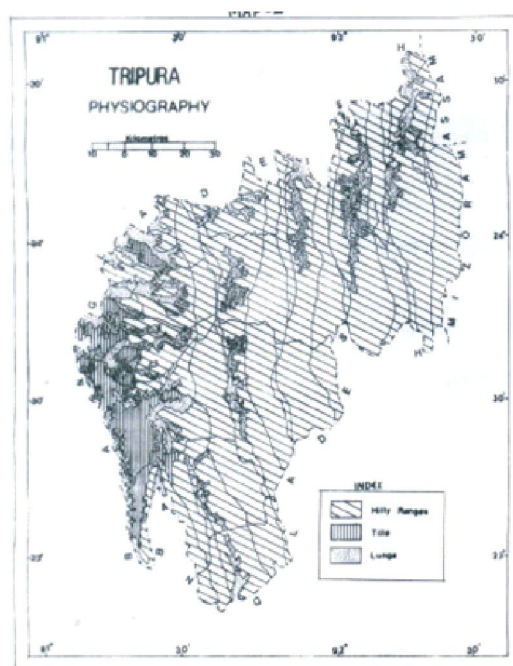


Figure : 1

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The state is characterized by six major hill ranges with a north-south orientation separated by narrow valleys approximately 20 km wide. The ranges continue southward extending to Chitagang hill ranges of Bangladesh. These ranges are Jampui, Sakhan, Longtarai, Atharomura, Baramura and Deotamura. The height increases from South to North and also from West to East. All physiographic divisions are dissected by medium and narrow valleys, streams and Gulleys. Most of the forest land of Tripura are found in hilly ranges and narrow valleys of the state. The tilla lands are mainly used by afforestation like plantation of Sal tree, Rubber plantation, etc.

Climate plays an important role in growing of natural forest of an area. In Tripura the climate is tropical in nature and is generally warm and humid. In comparison with plain lands, the hilly track enjoys lower temperature in both summer and winter. Three distinct seasons are recognized i.e. Summer, Rainy and Winter. The maximum temperature ranges between 31°C to 35°C and minimum temperature varies between 15°C to 18°C. Generally the plain area receive highest temperature in summer and the lowest temperature in the hilly part of the State. Temperature decreases from west to east. The annual rainfall was recorded at Dharmanagar 2640.05mm in the year 2001. The northern part of Tripura enjoys maximum rainfall due to the presence of high hill ranges. Some cyclonic rainfall occur at the late summer and early retreating monsoon season (Rainy) in Tripura. Rainfall gradually decreases in the western part of Tripura. In fact good climate is a precondition of natural growth of an area. Luxurious growth of natural vegetation are existed in the Northern part of the state. Some valuable trees are grown in this forest area namely Karai, Segun, Bahera, etc. But in the plain region the moderate climate ensures moderate growth of vegetation along with rubber plantation. So the landform and the climate of the state are closely related with the forest resources of Tripura.

Similarly Soils of Tripura is an economic resource of the state. It is a natural resource which are provided by the nature. Among the eight districts of Tripura the West Tripura district is characterised by much more plain lands which are drained by rivers. This region is more populous than other districts of Tripura. The north Tripura and the Dhalai district are characterised by hilly terrain where forest resources are more rich in growth. The South Tripura district and Gomati district are also more or less plain dotted region with mixture of high tilla lands. Both are drained by numerous rivers and covered by mixed type of forest resources.

Soil is the surface nature of an area where the life supporting system and socio-economic development of any region depends on the proper use of soil which is considered as the most valuable natural resource. It is the resultant product of parent materials of topography, past and present geomorphological processes, climatic and biotic factors, all play an important role in shaping the nature and types of soil in the state. The humid tropical monsoon climate has given rise to five broad groups of Soil as shown in Fig.2 below viz. Reddish yellow brown sandy soils, Red loam and sandy loam soils, Older alluvial soils, Younger alluvial soils and Laterite soils.

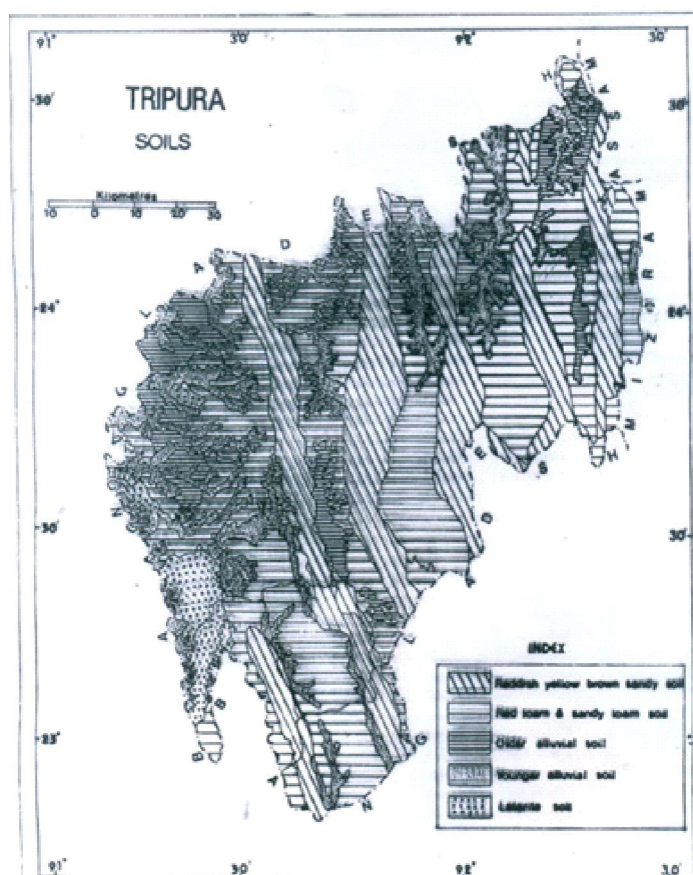


Figure: 2

The table below shows the details of soil group, taxonomy of soil and percentage of area with relation to geographical area.

Soil group	Soil taxonomy	Area(Sq. Km)	Area(%)
1.Reddish yellow brown sandy soils.	Alfisols/Inceptisols/Entisols.	3468	33.06
2.Red loam and Sandy loam soils.	Alfisols/Inceptisols.	4514	43.07
3.Older alluvial soils.	Alfisols/Inceptisols	1019	9.71
4.Younger alluvial soils.	Entisols	980	9.34
5.Laterite soils.	Ultisols	510	4.86

1. Reddish yellow brown sandy soil:- This type of soil group occupy nearly one third of the state's total geographical area(TGA). These are extensively residual in nature and found on the hilly ranges specially Jampui, Shakhantang, Longtarai, Athamura, Deotamura ranges. These are the product of disintegration of rocks mainly sandstones and shales. These are coarse and medium to fine in texture. This soil groups are continuously affected by soil erosion. These soils are poor in nutrients and can support only tropical forests in the lower ranges of hills and favours the cultivation of pineapple and oranges. Forestry and agro forestry can be a good scope in this type of soils.
2. Red loam and sandy loam soils:- It occupies 43.07% of the states TGA. Fine to coarse loamy soil are mostly developed in the undulating plains with low mounds area. The inter hill region of valleys which commonly known as 'lungas' are predominantly covered by these type of soil.. Highly acidic in nature, colors varies from grey to dark brown to olive brown soil. It is also a residual soil. The prominent areas of the states are Hazamara, Khowai, Mongiabari, Kathalia, Mohanpur, Teliamura ,etc.. Tea, rubber, mixed deciduous, sal and grassland vegetation are grown mainly.
3. Older alluvial soils:- This soils extend over 9.71% of states TGA. It is known 'Bhangar' and found the soil far from the river terraces. The colour of the soil varies from yellow to light yellow. This soil are found in river terraces, uplands and slopes which are subjected to gully erosion. So adequate measures of soil conservation must be needed in this soil zone.
4. Younger alluvial soil:- This alluvial soil is known as 'Khadar'. Usually occurred along the rivers near the periphery of the state as the river debouch in the lower plains of Bangladesh. It contains clay loams & loams and belongs to Entisol group. The soils are affected by floods almost every year and are enriched by deposition of new layer of silt and clay as the floods recede. The younger alluvial soil are liable to erosion by lateral cutting and bank-collapse. Hence, caution is needed in making incentive use of the soil in this zone. River training work is therefore essential to conserve the valuable soil resources which should not be allowed to washed down to Bangladesh plains. This soils are very deep grey brown to dark in colour. The surfaced texture is loam. The prominent location of newer alluvial soil are found in the Gomati, Haora, Manu, Muhuri, Fenny and Khowai river basin area and many other minor river basins of Tripura. This soils are best suited for grassland and Swamp vegetation.
5. Lateritic soils:- This soils cover only 9.34% of the TGA. The texture of the lateritic soil is coarse and poor in nutrients. The lateritic soil are ultisols group. This soil supports grasses and bushes. It is suitable for sal and rubber plantation with specific treatment and trenching of soil.

Forest being a very important natural resource, constitutes a vital component of population in Tripura and maintains ecological balance. As a natural resource it provides timber and fuel and constitutes a vital component of the state's economy.

Changing pattern of major Forest area:

Though there is no major changes in the total forest area from 2001 to 2011 but there are little changes might be due to afforestation. In 12th Five years plan, application of new Forest protection law will protect the natural forest.

Sl. No	Major Forest	2001		2011	
		Area in Sq.Km	Percentage to Total Geographical area	Area in Sq.Km	Percentage to Total Geographical area
1	Reserve Forest(RF) Proposed	3588.183	34.20%	3588.183	34.20%
2	Reserved Forest (PRF) Unclassified	509.025	4.85%	509.025	4.85%
3	Govt. Forest(UGF)	2195.473	20.93%	2195.473	20.93%
4	Total	6292.681		6292.681	

Types of Forest :

According to the classification of Champion and Seth the forest of the state have been classified in six categories (Fig : 3).

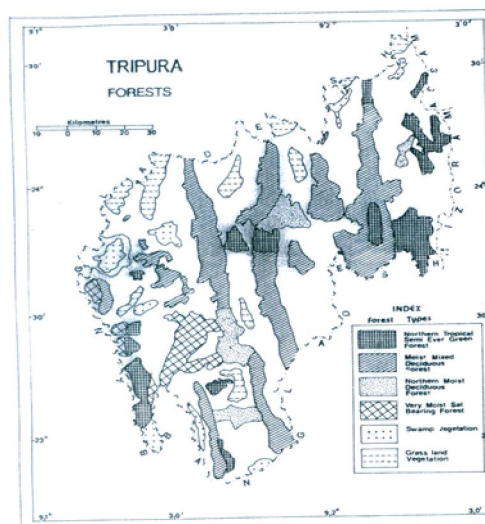


Figure : 3

The natural forest have grown on climate , altitude and nutrient rich soil of the state. The types forests are shown in the table below:

Sl. No	Forest types	Area in sq. km
1	Northern Tropical Semi Evergreen Forest	150.94
2	Moist Mixed Deciduous Forest	550.28
3	Northern Moist deciduous Forest	1230.04
4	Very Moist Sal bearing Forest	87.77
5	Swamp Vegetation	1316.82
6	Grassland Vegetation	397.09
7	Total	3732.94

1.Northern Tropical Semi Evergreen Forest:

This forest zone is now known as Cachar Tropical Evergreen Forest. It exists in the eastern and to some extent in the south western and central part of the state. The covering areas are Panisagar, Kanchanpur, Parts of Kumarghat , Teliamura, Melaghar, Bagafa and Satchand blocks. This forests now exists only in patches in the steep hill slopes and rocky surfaces. Garjan, Bamboo are the main species. It is partly used by the Tribal people of Tripura as building materials.

2.Moist Mixed Deciduous forest :

There are two varieties of Moist Mixed Deciduous Forest found in Tripura such as Mixed Deciduous Forest and Moist Mixed Deciduous Forest. These are generally found intensively in the State. This forest zone extend in north -south trending appearance. The main species are Kanak, Bahera, Poma, Korai, Awal, Harguza and Muli Bamboo. This is the best habitation zone for the people of Tripura.

3.Northern Moist Deciduous Forest :

This forest zone occurs in scattered areas of Kanchanpur, Teliamura, Amarapur and Satchand block of Tripura. The natural growth occurs along the slopes of main hill ranges and are very open due to intensive jhuming. Awal, Udal, Gamar , Harbujha, Kumira are the main trees in this zone. The bamboo growth is of medium quality due to jhuming. Many Tripuri Tribal people live in this zone and they use the forest for their livelihood.

4. Very Moist Sal Bearing Forest :

This forest zone is found in small patches in Melaghar block and low lying areas of the state. Now this forest zone as East Himalayan Lower Bhabar Sal. Sal is found mixed with Garjan. The main species are Bhabar Sal, Kanak, Bahera , Harguja, Awal, Gamar and Kajikara. This zone is suitable for mixed population.

5. Swamp vegetation:

From 2011 this forest zone is known as Low Alluvial Savannah Woodland. Swamps locally occupy a very large area all over the state. Most of the lungia land is dominated by this type of vegetation . Water Hyacinth are the common species in this area. This vegetative zone is unsuitable for the inhabitants . But at present due to pressure of mixed population (Tribal and Nontribal) the Swampy lands are filled up and have been made suitable for human habitation. It covers the areas of Bishalgarh, Matabari, Jirania and Melaghar blocks.

6. Grassland Vegetation:

This type of forest is now known as Secondary Moist Bamboo Brakes. A large part of the state is blanketed with vast expanse of bamboo brakes which maintains the condition of equilibrium by biotic influence. Normally, this land has been treated as fallow land. It is partly used by the tribal people and also by the Bengali community of Tripura.

Forestry :

The annual revenues from the forest in the state is around Rs 300 lakhs. The main forest products are Timber, Fuel wood , Thatch, Fodder and Bamboo. There is a wide gap between supply and demand of the forest products. The supply also includes Timber from settled and private land. An inventory survey carried out by the Forest Survey of India in the year 1991. It gives average number of stems and volume per hectare. Now this situation has slightly changed due to increased in plantation area but volume per hectare in different forest zone strata remains more or less the same. The given table is showing the growing stock of the State.

Sl. No	Stratum	Area in Sq Km	Forest area (% of Geog. area)
1	Hardwood Forest	1829	17.43
2	Hardwood mixed with bamboo	484	4.61
3	Bamboo forest	938	8.94
4	Plantation	2221	21.17
5	Shifting cultivation	840	7.81
6	Grand Total	6292	59.98

Source: Report on Forest Resources of Tripura 2013.

The forest of the state closely interrelated with the high rainfall, high relative humidity and good nutrient soil. So, the forest are in very high productivity zone. Excellent silvicultural condition prevails for forest production. It is commercially important on the ground of forestry. Nowadays, plantation of trees are highly important. Teak, Sal, Gamar, Chamal are important commercial planted trees. All trees are 20 years of age. The state is located in the 9B- North East hills Bio-geographic zone. So it is extremely rich in biodiversity. Local flora and fauna bears a very close affinity and resemblance with floral and faunal components of Indo-Malayan and Indo- Chinese sub-regions. Tripura has one of the oldest and richest and most diverse cultural traditions associated with the use of medicinal plants. Herbal medicines used by the rural people including tribal people also. Bamboo place a vital role of the economy of the state as it serves the artisan and non artisan users of the state. Barak, Bari, Mritanga, Muli, Paora , Makal, etc are mainly used in making of bamboo make products. The tribal people of the state are engaged in making Agar Stick and fine bamboo stick for the bamboo products. These are commonly found in the typical rural area. In the rural economy, Timber, Fuelwood, Thatch, Fodder, Bamboo, etc plays an important role.

Natural forest have some economic value for the people of the state. Settlement pattern has changed in association of natural forest in few areas. Forest is a vital component of the eco system and plays a vital role in maintaining ecological balance. Major environmental problems arises due to misuse of forest resources. Recently the department of forest have taken some policy like JFM(joint forest management) and PFM(Participatory Forest Management) to improve the forestry of Tripura. It tries to resolve the conflict between the users and managers. Sustainable development and consideration of conservation carried out by the new concept of Participatory Forest Management. Today reckless destruction of the natural resources has stopped , on the other hand proper protection of the forest and the judicious use of its products can bring about economic prosperity . Forest personnel have also realized that without active cooperation of the people, it is not possible to save environment and forest. In 1996 and 97 , the forest dept. have used the fallow land under the scheme of "Agan Ban Prakalp". It will help to guide the people in raising plantation of tree species on upland and non-arable land of their holdings.

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The Shift and Crisis in the Pattern of Life and Livelihood of the Tribal People of Tripura in Reference to Sudhanya Deb Barma's Novel 'Hachuk Khurio'

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Rupasree Debnath**

Abstract:

The changing patterns of life and livelihood in respect of the tribal people of small hilly state Tripura is very clearly depicted in the Kokborok novel "Hachuk Khurio" (in the lap of hills) which triggered a tenor of renaissance among the tribal people, written by Sudhanya Deb Barma. In this novel novelist pictured how the large scale influx of refugees from neighbouring country Bangladesh (former East Pakistan) and the transition of Tripura from monarchism to democracy brought many advantages and disadvantages to the tribal people regarding their life and livelihood leading them towards development by the change of thinking power and also driving them towards a confused state regarding their selection of the definite way of earning livelihood. If we go through the novel we find that how protagonist Narendra Deb Barma being a representative of tribal populace tried hard to bring the development and the modernisation in the condition of tribal people not by escaping from their cultures and traditions rather sustaining them in the society which were under threat. Through the character of Naren, novelist Sudhanya Deb Barma attempted to bring awareness and consciousness in the mind of the tribal people to develop their frame of mind by abolishing the superstitions and orthodoxy ideas from their mind because we know that literary works and literary characters arise public sentiment to bring changes in the society. The present paper tries to show tribal people's struggles in different aspects regarding their life and works in the context of the novel "Hachuk Khurio" (in the lap of hills) and to explore the present scenario of tribal people in Tripura in the context of life and works.

Sudhanya Debbarma, one of the renowned writers in the field of Kokborok Literature of Tripura wrote the first Kokborok novel "Hachu Khurio" (in the lap of hills) which immortalises his place in Kokborok literature. Novelist's social, political and cultural ideas, beliefs as well as his profound love for the indigenous people of Tripura are vividly presented in this novel. The rustic people occupy an important

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place in his novel as they are close to the roots of the soil and nature. Being a representative of the tribal society, he examined very closely the customs, habits, cultures and life style of the tribal people. He also realised the sufferings and misfortunes of the tribal people.

During the partition a large scale of refugees from the Bangladesh (former East Pakistan) had to take shelter in the small hilly state, Tripura which brought significant changes in the social, political and economical status of Tripura. In this changing atmosphere tribal people of Tripura faced hardships regarding their life and livelihood which ultimately created identity crisis among them. If we go through the novel it is quite vivid that how the transition in different strata of society compelled the tribal people to usher changes in their social-cultural context even in their occupation of shifting cultivation which was their only way to earn livelihood for long years. They had to adopt another way of earning livelihood because the land required for shifting cultivation became narrowed down with the arrival of the refugees in Tripura.

In the novel "Hachuk Khurio" we see how the novelist expressed his own grief for destroying the shifting cultivation through the representation of Bharatmuni's character whose heart cries for the scarcity of crops in the shifting cultivation because of the density of population. Bharatmuni's situation became more painful when he took the path of suicide being unable to bear this humiliated condition. When the significant changes penetrated into the habits, codes and conventions of the life style of the tribal Jumia society they faced tremendous crisis in earning their livelihood and also balancing the economical condition. This crisis led many tribal to choose the improper way of earning money which is clearly expressed in this novel through the character of Bharatchandra, the husband of Banamala, brother of Shabita and grandson of Bhaktamani. On the otherhand grandfather, Bhaktamani earned his livelihood through farming and his grandson Bharatchandra does many cheap works to earn money. He remains busy in selling his ancient properties, in searching secret treasures and many other cheap works. He does not keep interest in hard working as he thinks that gaining the secret wealth is the easiest way to be rich and prosperous in life.

In this novel the character, Dukhia represents the life of the alcoholic tribal people who disinherit all his wealth because of the addiction of alcohol. Like Bharatcandra he is also misguided in respect of earning the livelihood as they both spent together many nights in the abandoned hills in searching the treasures of richness but at last they reached home with an agitated mind. However, the hero of the novel Naren ultimately succeeds to bring changes in Dukhia's life with his well advises as Dukhia gets engaged in selling curds, sweets etc. to earn his livelihood. Through the portrayal of the life of Bharatchandra and Dukhia the novelist clearly portrayed how the illiterate tribal people took the wrong way to earn their livelihood and ruined their lives.

Naren, the main protagonist of this novel acts as the mouthpiece of the novelist completed his MBBS course in spite of stern poverty of his family. In this novel we find Naren's effortless endeavour to develop his society by liberating it from all superstitions and prejudices which drive tribal people towards wicked path. On the virtue of Naren's advice his friend Bimal finds the right way to earn livelihood as he starts poultry farm in the midst of the abjection and poverty. Through the character of Naren, novelist Sudhanya Deb Barma attempted to bring awareness and consciousness in the mind of the tribal people to develop their frame of mind by abolishing the superstitions and orthodoxy ideas from their mind because we know that literary works and literary characters arise public sentiment to bring changes in the society.

The novelist portrayed another aspect of the sufferings of illiterate tribal people of the rural areas who are the subject of contempt and disgust to the urban literate tribal people. The novelist showed that the tribal society is divided into two parts-the rich and privileged in one part and the poor tribal living in abject and inhumane conditions of deprivation, misery and humiliation in another side.

In this novel the urban educated tribal people's abhorrence against the rural tribal people is clearly expressed in the remarks of Chandramallika towards Naren. The main reason behind this contempt is that urban tribal people are educated and economically advanced whereas the rural tribal people are lagging behind on these scores. The novelist vividly represented another point that the education, culture and dress code are directly or indirectly influenced by the economic condition. In this novel being a mere farmer Naren's father faces many difficulties to educate his son properly. For that reason Naren has to take shelter in other's home for education.

There is an inseparable relation between one's life and livelihood. The familial peace, happiness, and the education of children are determined by the economical condition of the family. It is because of the scarcity of money the most of the children of Mutaingar could not be educated where as the children of Gopen Thakur and Chandramallika received proper education on account of good economic condition. The family of Gopen Thakur and Chandramallika is different from other families because of their rich economical status even though they all belong to the tribal community. In this novel we also see that Mita gets the opportunity to lead an independent life as a nurse which makes her exemplary compared to other women of tribal community of village spending their days either as a worker in shifting cultivation or as a daily wage worker. Banalata, the wife of Bharatchandr also receives the same fate.

The pages of the novel "Hachuk Khurio" bears the dynamic changes of life and society through which the living style of the whole state is represented vividly. It is true that in the light of decent and civilized society a part of tribal people is developing with the changing of time but at the same time the remaining part is

leading their life in the hilly side without getting any opportunity. They are leading their daily life struggling every moment. They suffer every year because of the scarcity of water during winter season. Among them many old and young people had to die in the lap of the hill for the improper treatment. In the first part of "Hachuk Khurio" written in 1963 the novelist reflected many difficulties and sufferings of the tribal people which are still prevalent among them.

From the above discussions it is very clear that the novel "Hachuk Khurio" is the clear representation of the effect of the transition which tribal people faced after partition. That's why it is very important to know the changes regarding the life and livelihood of the Tribal people after partition in order to get a clear picture about Tribal people's social and economic situation in 21st century and in this regard the novel "Hachuk Khurio" is pathfinder. The root of every society, every caste is entrenched in the ancient history of that society, of that caste and in this way the main root of the tribal society is entrenched in the ancient history of tribal people and from this novel we can easily get the past history of tribal people's sufferings which make their life still miserable.

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