THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Theoretical Perspectives on the Dynamics of North-East Indian Tribal's Socio-Economic and Cultural Aspects of Indigenous Resource Base Management

Jitesh Chandra Saha
Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Govt. Degree College, Kamalpur, Dhalai, Tripura, India

Abstract:
There is intricate relationship among nature of resource base, landscape pattern, cultural framework and the mode of resource management. Sustainable harnessing of indigenous resources, particularly renewable forest resources of hilly areas is generally labour intensive in all forms including input, intermediate and finished products. This is concomitant with nature of the resource base and terrain of North-Eastern part of India where mostly tribal population resides, especially when their collective cultural framework revolves around natural endowment. Keeping this in view, this paper attempts to study the dynamics of change in tribal cultural values in correlation with other changes of the North-East India and its impact on changing their pattern of resource management and occupational structure as well as makes an effort to analyze the necessity of their culture compatible resource management way-outs.

Keywords: *Economic history, cultural economics, economic development, social value*
JEL Classification – N00, O13, Z10, Q 20, I30, A 13.

1. Introduction

Culture of a community reflects intrinsic values respected by them in all incidences. It is the most important foundation stone for institutional structure construction and its functioning *(Glaeser, et al, 2004)* and all these structures are inevitably related to daily proceedings of the people.

When values followed by a community do not contradict social welfare criterion of resource management, they become collective, culturally, and its reflection is mirrored in concomitant institutional frameworks *(Hofstede, 1986)*. There remains no social stratification on the basis of occupation. Equal right of all community members over existing resources prevails and distribution of income remains equal *(Chen, 1995)*. Framed norms of institutional structures preserve that cultural trend and discourage any opposed activity. For example, in Bongcher community of Tripura if community members do not participate in social activities, they are punished to bear monetary burden *(Sailo, 1992)*.

Belief on specific values partially deviated from general welfare leads to joint activities and social structure becomes stratified occupationally and culturally *(Leach, 1967)*. Resources are harnessed through group formation and sectarian dominant rights over existing resources gradually may grow. Interrelated income distribution becomes sectarian and within sector not necessarily equitable. Institutional norms also become modified to sustain emerged feudal structure and arrange punitive measures for deviation albeit with considerable relaxation over time *(Oommen, 2009)*.

When a community internalizes the values in complete contradiction to social welfare these may determine another format of social cohesion in order to achieve materialistic gains. Social structure becomes stratified like the legs of millipedes and materialistic criterion emerges as the sole determinant of social relationship. To ladder materialistic height initially exploitation, corruption, fights, riots and even a human casualty *(Banfield, 1958)* become frequent among community members in harnessing resources and later on may even lead its transference to outsiders. Income distribution becomes extremely skewed and economic dependence of aborigines by loosing resources, falls almost entirely on them who, having started production with transferred and outside resources, take advantage through exploiting indigenous labour to make surplus profits and also use skilled outside labour leading to widespread unemployment and abject poverty with consequent migration. Due to acculturization of remaining few community people social bonding and their original culture become virtually extinct. To what extent materialistic criterion can influence the decision making process is strongly debatable, but surely protective sheath is needed for providing welfare enhancing direction.

From this viewpoint, traditional cultural ethos followed by tribal community and changes in it over time will certainly cast significant impact on nature of resource management through the guidance of intricately, interrelated various institutional structures (Greif, 1994). An attempt is made through this paper to capture that socioeconomic dynamic wheeled by cultural traits in the changing outlook of tribal community of North-East India towards their indigenous resource base and its management for achieving the next level of advancement.

2. Theoretical Perspective on Tribal Culture and Resource Management

The unique feature of North-East Indian tribal culture at known time-frame was their collective attitude in daily life moorings and festival celebration *(Karna, 1990)*. Although communitywise, tribes did dwell in different clans, villages and live with others harmoniously there was a spontaneous movement among them and unity in accomplishing any activity. Their performance was collective and every community member used to exercise equal rights over available resources *(Burman, 1990)*. There was no inter-tribal administrative framework, although democratic intra-tribal administration did exist as clan, the village council and village chief to preserve their invaluable collective culture *(Bose, 1979)*. Still now, these cultural values are followed by few primitive tribal groups living in extremely inaccessible areas.

With linking to the mainland and undertaking of mining and tea plantation initially in then Assam hills as well as opening up of foreign trade routes by the British Government to access resources gradual erosion of their collective interest was initiated, although major part of North-East India was under isolation by inner line regulation to prevent frequent tribal raids and maintain administrative control. This late start alongwith inaccessible hilly terrain shielded to some extent from not influencing traditional tribal culture in some areas still now. In order to provide better administration, remove backwardness and bring peace in micro-regions disturbed by bitter clashes among tribal community members and chiefs resulting from the unrestricted harnessing of resources, inter-tribal administrative machinery was introduced by British administrators. This limited resource utilisation by community member only within their own clan and village territory and slowly reduced social interaction *(Mandal, 2001)*, gradually disorganizing their solidarity. This transformed general collective interest into sectional co-operative interest with existing administrative set-up.

Economically, this resulted in a lower output level for general livelihood and sustenance as their aggregate resource base became shortened. After their accession to the British Empire, although they started co-operating with their policies respect for collective values was prevalent within a tribal clan and village. Gradually this was also culminated and with introduction of permanent rights over resources, administrative network through community rulers spread root in a tribal village. Aborigines got deprived by outsider profit-making non-tribal persons and institutions run through external instructions and incentives as well as vested interested class originated within tribal communities. Instead of protesting against their vanquished collective way of resource management they developed nexus with existing administration to sustain resource ownership and became part of external administrative machinery to achieve a better standard of living. Many tribal people lost their hard toiled resources and turned into being having capacity to put only labour in productive activities and this resulted into further social stratification based on resource backed occupational structure *(Sharma, 1995)*. From an economic viewpoint out of four essential ingredients of production they were left with the only one and their output level for a livelihood and minimum sustenance was reduced drastically. They became weaker in all respects by loosing resource, physical stamina and collective strength and this provided opportunity of exploiting their cheap solidarity-less, hard working starved labour to external rulers run through vested interested groups. Due to deviation from social welfare consideration a few tribal cooperating with then administrative set-up swelled in further at the cost of their large community members and was the forerunner in snatching away their legitimate rights over resources, leading to collapse of collective brotherhood and humanity forming basic components of tribal culture *(Menamparampil, 2009)*. Their economic structure became extremely skewed. As vested interested groups gradually started employing own and skilled outside workers to make more profit and as many tribes after loosing resources could not earn their sustenance they began to migrate for livelihood leading to gradual weakening and replacement of tribal culture in resource management *(Gupta, 2007)*. After Independence, many outside contractors, officials and businessmen entered this region and same trend continued. Although newly formed Government was engaged in industry based economic development and distributing gains of the Green revolution in initial five-year plan periods their consideration for tribal sufferings led to arrangement for funding under Article 275(1) of constitution, 'Panch Sheel' in late 50s *(Dutta, 1999)* and that of tribal sub-plans in the early 70s *(Bhattacharjee, 1996)*. Alongwith these presently globalisation and liberalisation are reaching even tribal majority regions and if these lead to commoditification of prevailing culture interwoven in all activities due to onslaught of increasingly strengthened cultural homogeneity *(Nederveen, 1994)* as one line of thought goes like this, their culture may become a purchasable showpiece item providing occasional enjoyment than sustaining aesthetics in rituals and workings *(Sen Gupta, 2008)* and maintaining everlasting strong social cohesive bond which connote basic historical philosophy of humanity leading to vividness and collective working plea.

3. Resource Base of North-East India

Natural resource base of North-East India mainly comprises of abundant forest resources especially bamboo and cane groves, orchids, medicinal plants, hydro-power potential, coal, limestone, dolomite, oil and natural gas alongwith scanty deposit of asbestos, clay, building stones, graphite, copper, gold, iron, refractories, low grade glass sands and radioactive elements. Recent geolological exploration shows minor sub-economic concentrations of metallic minerals in precambrian and lower palaeozoic zones of Meghalaya, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and ophiolite belt of Nagaland and Manipur *(Geological Survey Of India, 2011)*.

Presently, 139 major scheduled tribes out of 718 notified category *(Annual Report, 2012 - 2013)* live in North- Eastern states where 4 % & 12 % Indian and ST population respectively reside *(Census, 2011)* and these states cover 25 % and 38 % of general and tribal forest areas in nearly 8 % Indian territory. Volume of forest cover per ten thousand populations in general & tribal districts is 5.72 sq. kms. and 41.35 sq. kms. respectively whereas for north eastern states these stand at 38.12 sq. kms and 126.59 sq. kms respectively. Although in general and tribal districtwise north eastern states compared to India are having greater forest cover per ten thousand population and also it had in the previous decade, this statistic was reduced by larger margin for this region from both respects over that period *(Forest Survey Of India, 2001 & 2011)*.

3.1. Arunachal Pradesh

This state is bestowed with abundant forest resources and tremendous hydro-power potential. Vegetation can be classified as tropical, sub-tropical, pine, temperate, alpine, bamboo and cane forests and grasslands. Over five hundred medicinal plants and six hundred orchids are found here and known as Orchid Paradise of India *(Forest Survey of India, 2011).*

Coal, dolomite and limestone constitute major mineral base and cobalt, copper, gold, graphite, lead-zinc, marble, nickel, tin and tungsten comprise minor minerals *(Geological Survey of India, 2010).*

Altogether twenty major tribes live mainly in forest villages and their sustenance and livelihood depend on a wide variety of forest resources. They practise predominantly jhum cultivation, terrace and wet cultivation to some extent, weaving and trade in clothes, orchids and herbal plants. Their culture values spirit and nature and respect myths and fictions as well as their festivals and group dances bear inseparable connection to agricultural activities. Villages are administered by village councils like kebang for Adis and hereditary village chief on democratic basis *(North East Resources Databank, 2012).*

3.2. Assam

Assam is gifted with bounty of natural resources. Forest ranges from tropical rainforests to deciduous to riverine grasslands, bamboo and cane orchards and numerous wetland ecosystems. Over six hundred orchids and about three hundred medicinal herbs are found alongwith high quality lemon, world's hottest chilly Bhut Jalakia and a wide variety of aromatic plants *(Forest Survey Of India, 2011).*

Rich mineral deposits of crude oil, natural gas, coal, limestone, granite and iron ore alongwith minor minerals of fireclay, lithomarge, sillimanite and glass sand are found here *(Geological Survey Of India, 2009).*

Assam's tribal community consists of twenty three scheduled tribes living mostly in hilly tracks with predominance of scattered Bodo and Mishing tribes. Their culture respects ancestors, elders and nature, encourage agricultural activities, boost social solidarity through hospitality, collective celebration and social contact in age-old institutions and rejuvenate by shedding monotonocity. Village is the most important institution administered by hereditary and democratic village heads, democratic village council and elder villagers in Namgargh. Their livelihood mainly depend on cultivation particularly hilly tribes are jhumias. Sericulture and weaving especially for women folk, metal work, animal husbandry and producing bamboo and cane handicrafts are also important occupation for them. At present two autonomous hill districts councils along with one territorial area are running in Assam *(North East Resources Databank, 2012).*

3.3. Manipur

Forest products are the most important natural resources, having diversified flora and fauna. Forests fall in four category of tropical semi-evergreen, dry temperate, sub-tropical pine and tropical moist deciduous. Valuable furniture timbers, short and tall grasses, reeds, bamboo and cane along with rubber, tea, coffee, orange and cardamom grow in plenty at hilly areas whereas rice and cash crops are found abundantly in valley regions. In addition to Siroi Lily five hundred orchids grow here *(FSI, 2011).*

Principal minerals found are limestone, chromite, dimension stone, lignite and clay along with scanty deposit of copper, nickel and cobalt bearing minerals, magnetite, asbestos and salt *(GSI, 2011).*

Thirty three scheduled tribes live mostly in hilly districts with predominance of Nagas and Kuki-Chins in hills and Meities and Pangals in valleys. Cultural practices of patriarchal and hereditary chieftainship is found among Kuki tribes whereas Naga tribes follow democratic way. Agriculture is the main occupation and they mostly practise jhum cultivation. The next important profession is their indigenous knowledge based skilled handloom industry run mainly by women, cane and bamboo crafts, pottery and toy making which like agriculture bear a close relation to their cultural practices. All customs, theatres and festivals celebrated throughout year, lead to social interaction and boost their morale, physique, familial and social solidarity by collective effort. Presently, six autonomous district councils are running there *(NERD, 2012).*

3.4. Meghalaya

Meghalaya is bestowed with abundant natural resources, mainly forests. Besides timber, non-timber forest produces of cane, bamboo, mushroom, orchid, oil yielding trees, tree barks, beetlenut, orange, cashewnut, honey, lichen, wax and commercially important grasses are extracted every year in large quantities. Over three thousand flowering plants and several valuable medicinal plants point towards enriched bio-diversity *(FSI, 2011).*

Major minerals found are coal, limestone, clay, quartz and sillimanite. Besides iron ores, uranium, copper, granites and gold are also scantily found *(Meghalaya Mineral Policy, 2010).*

Mainly three tribes comprising of Khasis, Jaintias and Garos inhabit hilly terrain. Their culture particularly dances performed in festivals at various levels is related to human life-cycle and natural seasons maintaining balance between people and eco-system and strengthening brotherhood and social solidarity. They are unique in practicing matrilineal descent. Traditional institutions maintain social law and order on the basis of customary beliefs and practices. About eighty percent people depend entirely on agriculture for livelihood. Sericulture and weaving are the next important occupations alongwith significant potential avenues in food and fruit processing industries and hydro power generation. Presently three autonomous district councils are running *(NERD, 2012).*

3.5. Mizoram

Mizoram is rich in forest resources having wild flora and fauna. Forest cover falls into three categories of tropical wet evergreen, tropical moist deciduous and sub-tropical pines. More than four hundred medicinal plants, twenty two species of bamboo and abundant growth of trees, plants, bushes and grasses are found *(FSI, 2011).*

Minor deposits of shell limestone, coal, hard sandstone bands, saline springs and a few gas seepage have been located *(GSI, 2011).*

Mizoram is homeland of fourteen scheduled tribes with predominance of Mizo (Lushai) tribes, Chakma, Pawi, Lakher, Kuki and Hmar. Social unit for them is village usually set on top of a hill with chief's house at centre and surrounding bachelor's dormitory. Their culture values hospitality, kindness and self-sacrifice for social services and do not believe in class distinction and gender discrimination. Any celebration is observed collectively by whole village like a big family. Ninety percent are cultivators and practice shifting cultivation which alongwith other activities are connected to festivals and cultural celebrations. Their daily necessities are fulfilled by forest produces and herbal medicines are used by almost all interior people for medical treatment. Presently traditional chieftainship is non-existent and three separate autonomous district councils and village councils under sixth schedule constitute important pillar of grassroot democracy *(NERD, 2012).*

3.6. Nagaland

This state is endowed with rich natural resources primarily forest resources. About two thousand five hundred flowering and nine non-flowering plants are found alongwith rare orchids and numerous herbal plants. Due to varying physiographic and geo-climatic conditions vegetation cover widely varies from tropical rain forest to alpine, from evergreen to sub-tropical and bamboo forest *(FSI, 2011).*

Major minerals of limestone, coal, nickel-cobalt bearing magnetite alongwith good quality dimension stones are found in ophiolite and metamorphic belts. Minerals like chromites, basemetal sulphide, slate, clay, serpentine, asbestos, oil and natural gas are found on minor scale *(GSI, 2011).*

Nagaland is abode of sixteen major tribes and presently its eight districts show their distinctive inhabitancy on hill-top villages surrounded by granaries. Tribe and clan traditions and loyalties are very important for them. Within village, social responsibilities are valued, strong cultural integrity exists and consensual decision making is practiced. This is mainly an agrarian economy and people practice shifting and terrace cultivation. Their cultural activity performed throughout year, is related to different stages of agriculture and social activities. Alongwith agriculture trading in forest products and weavings constitute an integral part of Naga livelihood. Presently in partnership with State Government village councils and village development boards based on traditional laws constitute the most important part of modern decentralised governance system in Nagaland *(NERD, 2012).*

3.7. Sikkim

Forest is the richest resource among all other natural resources namely water resources with tremendous hydro-electric potentiality and livestock resources. As its physiography is stretched from sea-level to sky forest ranges from tropical dry deciduous to temperate to alpine and tundra with all varieties of flora and fauna. Four thousand flowering plants, three hundred ferns, eleven oaks, eight tree ferns, about forty primulas, thirty five rhododendrons, over six hundred orchids, twenty species of bamboos and over four hundred medicinal plants are found. Apart from timber and herbal medicines forests also serve as an important source of construction materials. Cardamom, ginger, turmeric and tea are major crops grown while among principal fruits there are Mandarin orange, guava, mango and banana *(FSI, 2011).*

Substantial deposit of copper, lead and zinc is found in Sikkim alongwith scanty resources of non-metallic minerals like coal, graphite, dolomite, limestone, marble, wollastonite, talc, sillimanite and asbestos *(GSI, 2012).*

Broadly three groups of tribal people comprising Lepchas, Bhutias and Sherpas inhabit in villages administered by tribal leaders. They are very cheerful, peace loving people and celebrate any occasion collectively with folk songs and physical skill making mask dances alongwith arts and crafts. Their culture and sustenance entirely depend on natural surroundings and follow spiritual line. Forests are an important source of livelihood and main economic activities are agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry. Mixed farming required for developmental process is commonly practiced by farmers. Although majority follow terrace cultivation still now some practice shifting cultivation for producing grains. Apart from satisfying daily necessities forests also serve as an important spot for orchid, timber and medicinal plants cultivation and tourist attraction. Though agriculture is basic economic activity gradually Sikkimese people are diversifying into Government services *(NERD, 2012).*

3.8. Tripura

Tripura's rich bio-diversity is found in forests of tropical evergreen, semi-evergreen, moist deciduous, swampy, riverine forests, bamboo, gurjan and grassland covering mostly hilly areas. About six hundred herbal plants, four hundred trees, over three hundred shrubs, two hundred climbers, twenty four orchids, sixteen climbing shrubs, thirty five ferns, forty five epiphytes and four parasites are found alongwith plenty bamboo, cane, valuable timbers, tropical and subtropical fruits, vegetables and spices *(FSI, 2011).*

Tripura has vast reserves of oil and natural gas alongwith considerable deposits of glass sand, clay minerals, shale and sand for construction, lignite and limestone *(GSI, 2011).*

There are nineteen scheduled tribes predominantly Tripuris and Reangs with their own distinctive cultures. Their belief is based on nature, folk songs and dances and folklores constitute an important part of culture. All these encourage them in every operation of cultivation and social activity as well as build confidence. Agriculture is their main economic activity and they practice jhum cultivation with recent participation in Sri method of plantation. They also make their livelihood from selling forest produce like

bamboo, cane and high quality timber crafts. Gradually horticulture, food processing, potato cultivation, rubber and tea plantation are becoming important alternative occupations for tribal jhumias in wet and terrace mode *(NERD, 2012)*.

4. Tribal Population and Forest Cover of North-East India

Demographic pattern shows number of tribal people increased from 1981 to 2011 at a greater rate than that of the non-tribal section in Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura whereas opposite trend is found in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Sikkim. Forest is homeland of mainly tribes not only in North–East India but also in entire India as tribal districts of India and North–East India cover almost total forest area. Among North–Eastern states significant afforestation took place in tribal districts of Assam over period 2001–2011 as its forest cover including dense and open forest areas was increased from around 45 % to almost entire state forest coverage.

On average forest of North-East states covered 25 % aggregate forest cover along with 24 % dense and 26 % open forest in 2001 but in 2011 although total and dense forest was increased that of open forest was reduced to 25 %. On this criterion situation in tribal districts of North-East India is better as volume of forest cover, dense and open forest became increased, but sounds alarming when compared to forest cover of all tribal districts in India and this shows aggregate forest cover, dense and open forest of North-East Indian tribal districts was reduced significantly from 38 %, 36 % and 42 % to 25 % separately.

Statewise statistics show that except in Arunachal Pradesh and marginally in Assam aggregate forest cover in total geographical area was increased from 2001 to 2011 in all other North-Eastern states, but in respect of tribal districts forest volume percentage was reduced marginally in Nagaland. In dense forest category significant deforestation took place in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Mizoram over that period, whereas in respect of open forest tribal districts of Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim suffered voluminous loss. Presently predominant presence of dense forest is found in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Tripura whereas in other four North-Eastern states prevalence of open forest is proportionately more. Comparison with previous decade shows that in Assam and Mizoram there had been the large scale destruction of dense forest whereas it was open forest which was largely cleared in Meghalaya, Manipur and Sikkim.

When the present situation of North–East Indian forestry is studied in terms of areas it is found that tribal districts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland suffered destruction of 635 km^2 and 27 km^2 forest cover respectively in the period 2001–2011. While dense and open forests of Arunachal Pradesh were reduced by 602 km^2 and 102 km^2 respectively, Nagaland faced widespread destruction of open forest by 2838 km^2. A similar situation is found in Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram while in respect of dense forest 12 km^2 losses are found in Assam and Sikkim each.

Comparison of tribal districts with non-tribal districts shows that only in tribal areas of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland forest volume in aggregate and open forest category is reduced while in respect of open forest only more than ten times clearing is found in tribal districts of Manipur and Meghalaya along with significant reductions in Mizoram and Nagaland *(India State of Forest Report, 2011)*.

5. Reserve and Protected Forest

Reservation and protection of forests were implemented to prevent indiscriminate and inefficient use of valuable renewable forest resources. Masses can also be taught about sustainable utilization of forest resources *(Chotso, 2005)* by respective officials and resources instead of being wasted in barricading forests may be deployed to further enhance forest input level as well as contribution from those sustainable resource utilizers, otherwise remaining idle may lead to increased household income and make a substantial value addition to aggregate output level. From this perspective instead of keeping idle, harnessing of natural resources by proper and sustainable utilizers may lead to enhanced renewability and regeneration capacity.

From Forest Survey of India, it can be seen that area under reserve forest was reduced in period 1991–2011 for Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Nagaland. While for Nagaland it was a continuous process over two decades, for Arunachal Pradesh and Assam it was started in later decade. In respect of protected forest similar to the overall Indian pattern significant continuous achievement was made by Tripura in that period and marginally by Meghalaya only in initial decade.

6. Occupational Pattern and Land Resources

Among North–Eastern states Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are tribal majority states where presently 69 %, 86 %, 94 % and 86 % people respectively are from tribal community. Only in Arunachal Pradesh tribal population was reduced in relative terms from 70 % in 1981 to 69 % in 2011. As these North–Eastern states comprise mainly of tribal people table I showing distribution of workers can help us in understanding pattern of tribal occupational structure over time. In Arunachal Pradesh percentage of cultivators increased from 67 in 1991 to 69 in 2004-05 and involvement in other profession as happens with advancement in stage of economic development, increased from 27 to 29. For Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland while cultivators share in total workers became reduced share of other workers increased over that period. But the worrying matter is that with sectoral transition as perceived a higher stage of development more people are also found to become landless agricultural labour although from 2001 onwards situation started improving. From table I it is found that workers engaged as agricultural labourers increased in percentage term from 1991 to 2001 in Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland along with a marginal decline in Arunachal Pradesh. Although encouraging facts come out when comparison is made to 2004-05, increasing participation in other activities and presence of landless workers clearly indicate reducing dependence and control on indigenous natural resources by inhabitants and consequent withering away of interwoven cultural customs and traditions as well as points towards necessity of reorientation of cultural values around new occupational structure if it is to be accepted as one step ahead in advancement process as this also signifies reduction in

size of labour intensive industries related to forest produce, rope and toy–making, netting, weaving, wood and stone carving, paper making, metal and handicrafts where labour intensity varies from .30 to .96 due to availability of substitutes and consequent lowered absorption capacity of unemployed labour force *(Das, et al, 2009).* If particularly trend of rural tribal occupational structure is studied, available statistics shows that among North Eastern states appropriate steps need to be taken in Arunachal Pradesh and especially in Meghalaya where agricultural labour percentage increased from .72 and 9.97 in 1981 to 9.97 and 12.49 in 2004-05 respectively.

State	Cultivators			Agricultural Labourers			Other Workers			Scheduled Tribes					
										Cultivators		Agricultural Labourers		Other; Workers	
	1991	2001	2004-05	1991	2001	2004-05	1991	2001	2004-05	1981	2004-05	1981	2004-05	1981	2004-05
Arunachal Pradesh	66.99	68.51	69.00	5.77	4.39	1.74	27.06	25.92	29.16	91.40	75.35	0.72	1.58	8.88	23.07
Assam	60.04	44.22	51.99	13.69	14.93	10.54	25.38	37.12	37.23		68.77		7.91		23.31
Manipur	67.52	48.49	60.06	9.69	12.8	0.73	17.45	29.33	38.79	86.30	79.37	2.17	0.16	11.53	20.46
Meghalaya	64.74	55.99	60.47	14.53	20.01	12.18	20.34	21.72	27.17	69.55	61.52	9.97	12.49	20.48	25.99
Mizoram	81.87	80.89	76.94	2.88	3.78	0.82	14.86	14.3	22.22	78.81	77.03	2.35	0.83	18.84	22.14
Nagaland	82.25	73.36	60.74	1.61	4.03	0.19	15.8	20.1	38.87	83.86	62.43	0.31	0.09	15.83	37.48
Sikkim	63.39	54.9	46.74	8.85	7.09	2.02	27.12	36.37	51.23		54.77		1.22		44.01
Tripura	44.72	31.64	30.27	27.27	27.76	8.97	26.38	37.33	60.55	64.03	42.50	28.72	9.66	7.25	47.84
Grand Total	48.68	40.11	39.41	32.66	32.29	24.86	16.49	22.7	35.62		42.27		33.61		24.12

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Workers

Source: Census of India, 1991 & 2001 and NSS Report No. 514, Household Consumer Expenditure among Socio-Economic Groups: 2004–05

Reflection of its impact can be visualised from land distribution of general and tribal people. Among tribal majority states over period 1995-2005 persons having marginal land except for Arunachal Pradesh increased in percentage term for Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland and also in respect of small landholders same trend is found except for Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. Comparatively situation is better in Meghalaya and Mizoram than in Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland as no increase in large landholding is found. Separately for tribal land holdings Arunachal Pradesh is the only state where percentage of marginal and small land possession increased whereas in Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland although marginal landholding increased, that of small category reduced and only for Naga tribes large landholdings recorded increase. Cross-section of those two time-periods shows general and tribal marginal land holders' presence in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh is below 10 % and 20 % respectively whereas this is over 50 % in Meghalaya and Mizoram and in category of small holding only for Nagaland this remains below 10% while more than double presence is registered in other tribal majority states. Taking these two categories jointly their presence is found to be only 15 % and 43 % in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh respectively whereas this stands over 80 % in other two states.

For other tribe minority four north eastern states persons having marginal land increased in percentage term except for Tripura and in respect of small landholder's also same trend is found. From perspective of land redistribution large landholders' percentage increased only in Sikkim and Assam signifying adjustment among smaller classes. For these states tribal landholding also shows similar trend. Except in Manipur marginal landholder's presence increased and that of small proprietors reduced. Cross-sectionwise in marginal category Manipur and Sikkim are found to be faced with smaller problem whereas in small category Tripura is lying ahead. Only in Sikkim tribal large landholders' presence increased. Over this period when percentage of total land possessed by tribes for all categories is estimated North Eastern states deviating from Indian aggregate, are found to record improvement. Only Tripura and Manipur register decrease of scheduled tribes' percentage in the marginal category, whereas in small land holding category success is found for Tripura, Manipur, Assam and Sikkim (*Agricultural Census, 2012).*

7. Conclusion

From economics viewpoint culture may be an important endogenous social input in development process *(Putnam, 1993)* to bring vigour for accelerating input functioning particularly that of labour and may lead to improved working environment *(Kim, et al,1994)* and substantial value addition *(Goswami, 1996).* Collective tribal culture of singing, dancing, sports and festivals observation related to various productive activities encourages them in bringing active labour force *(Kimmerer, 2002)* by removing monotonocity of life and attach love, respect and enjoyment to inputs usage process in production sector leading to enlightenment in realising sustainable indigenous resource management as not only a management but also an inseparable part of human life and consequent collective responsibility for preservation of natural resources to sustain common welfare. Values and respects inherent in tribal culture towards environment *(Pierotti, et al, 2000)* if not completely lost, still there is time for realising its significance not through superstitions but through insightful internalisation in preventing *(Wezah & Casino, 2011)* increased deterioration of environmental quality from ruthless exploitation of mass consumerism *(Pushparajan, 1992)* and released substantial resources otherwise spent for maintaining healthy environmental standards may be utilised to alleviate their economic backwardness. From this perspective setting institutional arrangement for indigenous resource management should keep into consideration long run significance of tribal cultural values *(Hofstede, et al, 1988)* and appropriate steps need to be taken to incorporate and disseminate their collective customs in undertaking any activity for enhancing their welfare, otherwise may lack an important source of human energy as well as social harmony and

welfare may become gloomy leading to communal riots and various types of displacement starting from migration to cultural vanishment and commditification as objective is to bring disappearance of their backwardness, not them and their culture. Since all people participate in their culture fund allocation may accord significant importance to their percentage presence and contribution for tribal affairs of north-eastern areas may be increased proportionately from ten to twelve percent and that of cultural affairs towards tribal sub-plan may be upgraded from category II to category III. To respect tribal people living pattern community-wise in villages and districts, improvement in their living standard may be realised through encouraging village based indigenous resource harnessing, generating cluster based programmes, running activities by forming co-operatives and self-help groups alongwith proper arrangement for micro-credit system and at most by making provision for communitisation of indigenous resource management process where authority role may be that of a responsible person who considers their welfare in awaring them about significance of economic programmes and its sustainable way-outs alongwith maintenance of proper working environment. This is their culture where they will find belongingness, interest and come forward with their traditional wisdom to learn sustainable harnessing of indigenous resources and implement that in development activities meant for removal of their backwardness as well as may lead to substantial national economic value addition.

8. References

1. Bhattacharjee, P.N. (1996): 'Tribes of Tripura - In the Process of Development', TUI, Vol. I
2. Bose, M.L. (1979): British Policy in the North-East Frontier Agency, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 24-25
3. Burman, B.K.Roy. (1990): 'Tribal Population And Development' in Bose, Ashish, Nongbri, Tiplut & Kumar Nikhilesh (Eds): Tribal demography And Development In North East India, Delhi, B.R. Publishing Corporation,
4. Chen, C. C. (1995): 'New trends in rewards allocation preferences: A Sino-U.S. comparison', Academy of Management Journal, 38 (2), 408-428
5. Chotso, Murohu (2005): Hazard of Jungle Burning and Its Mitigation in Phek District of Nagaland, master's thesis, Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical and Technological Science, 126
6. Das, D. K., Deepika Wadhwa & Gunajit Kalita (2009): 'The Employment Potential of Labour Intensive Industries: An Appraisal of India's Organised Manufacturing', ICRIER, New Delhi, Working Paper 236,
7. Dutta, Binayak (1999): 'Constructing India's North Eastern Tribal Policy and Verrier Elwin – A Review', Proceedings of North East India History Association – 19th Session, Kohima, Nagaland University
8. Glaeser, G., Porta, R. La, Lopez-de-Silanes, F. & Schleifer, A. (2004): "Do Institutions cause Growth", NBER Working Paper no.W10568
9. Greif, A. (1994): "Cultural beliefs and the organization of society: A historical and theoretical reflection on collectivist and individualist societies", Journal of Political Economy, October, 102 (5)
10. GOI (1981): Census 1981, Provisional Population Totals, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, New Delhi, Ministry of Home Affairs
11. GOI (1991): Census 1991, Provisional Population Totals, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, New Delhi, Ministry of Home Affairs
12. GOI (1991): Forest Survey Of India, India State of Forest Report, New Delhi, Ministry of Environment & Forest
13. GOI (2001): Census 2001, Provisional Population Totals, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, New Delhi Ministry of Home Affairs
14. GOI (2001): Forest Survey Of India, India State of Forest Report, New Delhi, Ministry of Environment & Forest
15. GOI (2007): Household Consumer Expenditure Among Socio-Economic Groups: 2004 – 2005, NSS 61st Round, Report No. 514 (61/1.0/7), New Delhi, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
16. GOI (2009): 'Geology And Mineral Resources Of Assam', Geological Survey Of India, Miscellaneous Publication, No. 30 Part IV Vol 2(i) - Assam, Guwahati, Essar Offset
17. GOI (2010): 'Geology And Mineral Resources Of Arunachal Pradesh', Geological Survey Of India, Miscellaneous Publication, No. 30 Part IV Vol I(i) Arunachal Pradesh, North Eastern Region, Shillong, Guwahati, Essar Offset
18. GOI (2010): Statistical Profile Of Scheduled Tribes In India, Statistical Division, New Delhi, Ministry of Tribal Affairs,
19. GOI (2011): Census 2011, Provisional Population Totals, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner,New Delhi, Ministry of Home Affairs,
20. GOI (2011): Forest Survey Of India, India State of Forest Report, New Delhi, Ministry of Environment & Forest
21. GOI (2011): 'Geology And Mineral Resources Of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland And Tripura', Geological Survey Of India, Miscellaneous Publication, No. 30 Part IV, Vol 1(Part-2), , Guwahati, Essar Offset,
22. GOI (2012): Agricultural Census, 2012, Department of Agriculture & Co-operation, New Delhi, Ministry of Agriculture,
23. GOI (2012): 'Geology And Mineral Resources Of Sikkim', Director General, Geological Survey Of India, Miscellaneous Publication, No. 30, Part XIX – Sikkim, Kolkata , Simla Street,
24. GOM (2010): 'Meghalaya Mineral Policy', Special Meghalaya Gazette, Shillong, Mining & Geology Department
25. Goswami, B.B. (1996): 'Prospects for Ethnic Reorganisation' in Ray, B. Datta & Agrawal, S.P. (Eds): Reorganisation Of North East India Since 1947, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company
26. Gupta, Ramnika (2007): 'Tribal Contemporary Issues Appraisal and Intervention', New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company
27. Hofstede, G. (1986): 'Cultural differences in teaching and learning', International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 10 (3), 301-320

28. Hofstede, G., & Bond, M. H. (1988): 'The Confucian connection: From cultural roots to economic growth', Organization Dynamics, 16, 4-21
29. Karna, M.N. (1990): 'Aspects Of Tribal Development In North East India' in Bose, Ashish, Nongbri, Tiplut & Kumar, Nikhilesh (Eds): Tribal demography And Development In North East India, Delhi, B.R. Publishing Corporation
30. Kim, U.M., Triandis, H.C., Kagitcibasi, C., Choi, S. & Yoon, G. (Eds) (1994): Individualism and collectivism: Theory, method and applications. London, Sage Publications
31. Leach, E.R. (1967): Political Systems Of Highland Burma: A Study Of Kachin Social Structure, Boston, Beacon Press
32. Mandal, Pratyusa Kumar (2001): "Understanding 'Development' in the Context of Tribal Societies of North East India: A Socio - Historical Perspective", Proceedings of North East India History Association – 21st Session, Imphal, Manipur University
33. Menamparampil, Thomas (2009): 'Communities in Transition', in Subba, T.B., Puthenpurakal, Joseph & Puykunnel, Shaji Joseph (Eds): Christianity and Change in Joseph North East India, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company
34. Nederveen, Pieterse J., (1994): 'Globalisation as Hybridisation', International Sociology, 9 (2)
35. North East Resources Databank (2012): Retrieved September 20, 2012 From http//: mdoner.gov.in
36. Oommen, T.K. (2009): 'Culture Change among the Tribes of Northeast India', in Subba, T.B., Puthenpurakal, Joseph & Puykunnel,Shaji Joseph (Eds): Christianity and Change in North East India, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company
37. Pierotti, R., & D. Wildcat (2000): 'Traditional ecological knowledge: The third alternative', Ecological Application, 10 (5),1333-1340
38. Pushparajan, A. (1992): Ecological World-view for a Just Society, Delhi, ISPCK, 54
39. Putnam, R. (1993): Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press,
40. Sailo, Salliana (1992): The Bongchers, Directorate Of Research, Agartala, Government Of Tripura
41. Sen Gupta, Surojit (2008): 'Globalisation and its Impact on Society Some Reflections', Globalisation in Deb, Bimal J., Sengupta, Keya & Datta Ray, B. (Eds): Globalisation and North East India, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company,
42. Sharma, B.D. (1995): 'Basic Issues in Tribal Development', TUI, IV
43. Wezah, Yiepetso & Casino, Tereso C. (2011): 'Towards a Relevant Theology of Nature: North-East India Tribal Perspective', Torch Trinity Journal, 14 (1), 99-115