

Tribal Development and Marginalisation in Assam

*A Dissertation Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in
Partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the
degree of*

Master of Philosophy

By

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Dedicated

To

My

Beloved Parents

**(Whose works and sacrifices for me always guided me
to find the meaning of my life)**



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CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled “**Tribal Development and Marginalisation in Assam**” is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, of Jawaharlal Nehru University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University and is my original work

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Contents

	Page Number
Certificate	
Acknowledgement	
Content	
List of Tables	
Abbreviations	
1. Introduction --	10-49
1.1 Research Problem	
1.2 Meaning of Development	
1.3 Theories of Development	
1.3a. Classical Theories of Development	
1.3b. Background of the Theory of Economic growth	
1.3c. Modernisation Theory	
1.3d. Structuralism and Dependency Theory	
1.3d (i). Marxist Theories of Development	
1.3d(ii). Paul Baran and Under Development Theory	
1.3e. Dependency Theory	
1.3e (i) Andre Gunder Frank and	
'Development of Underdevelopment'	
1.3.f. The World System Approach	
1.4. Culture and Development	
1.4a. Cultural Critique of Development	
1.5. Conceptualising Tribes and Tribal Development	
1.6. Land, Forest and Tribal Development: Issues of Marginalisation	
1.7. Survey of Literature	
1.8. Objectives	
1.9. Chapterisation	

2.1. General Feature of the Tribes in India

2.1a. Demography and Spatial Distribution of Tribes in India

2.1b. Number of Schedule Tribes

2.1c. Regional Distribution of Schedule Tribes

2.1d. Racial Composition

2.1e. Linguistic Diversity

2.1f. Religion of Tribes

2.1f(i). Tribes as Backward Hindu: Religion and the
Hindutva Identity Politics

2.1f(ii). Impact of Christianity on the Tribes in India

2.1g. Diversity of Occupation

2.2. Meaning of Tribes

2.2a. Official View on Tribes

2.2b. Origin of the Concept of 'Tribes': Colonial Conceptualisation

2.2c. Various Frameworks for Understanding 'Tribes' in Indian
Context

2.2c (i). Tribes as a Stage of Social Evolution

2.2c(ii). Understanding Tribes by the Means of Classification

2.2c (iii). Caste, Jati and Tribes

2.2c(iv) Sanskritisation of the Tribes

2.2c(v). Tribes and Peasant

2.2c(vi). Ethnicity, Nation and Tribes

2.2d. Recent Debate of Idea of Indigenous People: ILO Convention
and India

2.2d(i). Adivasi Identity of Tribe and Indigenous People

2.2d(ii). Indigenous Population and Tribes as Original
Inhabitant

2.3. Conclusion

3.1. Development and Environment

3.1a. Political Ecology and Cultural Politics Approach as Framework for Understanding the Resources Exploitation

3.1b. Ecological Marxism

3.2a. Colonialism and Indigenous People's Access to Land and Forest

3.2b(i). Colonial Approach to Tribes: Excluded and Partially Excluded Area

3.2b(ii). Legacy of Colonial Policy of Segregation in Post Independence Period: Fifth and Sixth Schedule Areas

3.3. Nehru's Philosophy for Tribal Development

3.4. Land and Tribal Development

3.4a. Communal Ownership of Land versus Private Property: Some Perspectives

3.5. Agrarian Situation

3.5a. Issues of Shifting Cultivation

3.5b. Settled Agriculture and Changing Class Relations

3.5c. Agrarian Classes

3.5d. Agrarian Restructuring and the Mode of Exploitation

3.6. Tribal Culture and Forest

3.6a. Forest administration in India

3.6a (i). Forest Administration in Pre Colonial Period

3.6a (ii). Forest Administration in the Colonial Period

3.6a (iii). Post Colonial Forest Administration

3.6b. Reserved Forest and the Rights and Livelihood of the People

3.7 National Tribal Policy

3.8. Conclusion

4. Chapter 3: Tribal Development in Assam: Inherent Contradictions and Conflicts— **116-146**

- 4.1. An Overview of Socio-Economic Situation of Tribes Assam
 - 4.1a. Demographic Situation of Tribes in Assam
 - 4.1b. Sex Ratio
 - 4.1c. Education Status
 - 4.1d. Work Participation Rate
- 4.2. Categorisation of Tribes in Assam: Plain and Hill Tribes
- 4.3. Socio-Economic and Political Situation of Tribes in Assam with respect to Forest and Land
 - 4.3a. Question of Land and its Relation with Tribes in Assam
 - 4.3a(i). Alienation in the Process of Migration
 - 4.1a(ii) Immigration and the Conflict over the Land
 - 4.1a(iii). Policies and Laws for Stopping the Land Alienation
 - 4.1a(iv). Provision of the Tribal Belts and Blocks
 - 4.1a(v). Provision of the Sixth Schedule Area
 - 4.3b. Post Colonial Development Policy and Displacement of the Tribes in Assam
 - 4.3b (i). Impoverishment and the Marginalisation of Tribes in the Process of Displacement:
 - 4.3b (ii). Rehabilitation Policy in Assam
 - 4.3c. Changing Nature of the Economy
- 4.4. Forest and the Tribes in Assam
 - 4.4a. Assam Forest Policy, 2004
 - 4.4b. Situation of Tribes in Forest Villages in Assam
- 4.5. Conclusion

Conclusion— **147-153**

Bibliography— **154-169**

List of Tables

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
1. Table 4.1: Population of major STs in Assam, 2001 Census.	118
1. Table 4.2: Literacy rate of major STs in Assam	119

Abbreviations

AIRTSc- Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes

BTAD- Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District

CPR- Common Property Resource

DPs- Displaced Persons

IDP- Internally Displaced Persons

NWFP- Non Wood Forest Produce

PAPs- Project Affected Persons

TAC- Tribes Advisory Councils

Introduction

Introduction

The study of tribes and the tribal development are of immense interest since the colonial period. The nature of interest on tribes and tribal development has been changing over the period of time. Tribes constitute an important component of Indian society with its socio-economic and cultural life showing close and symbiotic association with nature. The main interest of the colonial ethnographers and administrators was the creation of a body of knowledge about the socio-economic and cultural condition of various communities in the country which will be beneficial to meet their administrative needs. The first hand data collected by British ethnographers about various communities were first systematic attempt to understand tribes in extensive manner. The predominance of communal mode of living and ownership of property which was more conditioned to meet the occupational needs of the tribes created interest among colonial administrator. Tribes were mainly associated with the economy like shifting cultivation, hunting, food gathering and other forms of occupations to continue their sustenance. These occupations were categorised as primitive because they use simple technology for these occupations and are mainly to meet their subsistence need.

In the post independence period, the studies on tribes got importance on the eve of making of constitution which started the debate on the approaches to be adopted for various communities of the country. Again, the process of development adopted by the Indian state in the post independence period has lead to more interest in the areas inhabited by the tribes if not the tribes itself, because the tribes mostly inhabited in the regions rich in the mineral and the other natural resources which are essential for the development industrialisation, a significant way for development. Besides, modern development is a spatial activity which necessitate large tract of land for the instalment of the projects. The communal mode of ownership of land by tribes makes it legally easy for the state to get hold of such land. When the state exploit the mineral or the natural resources, or acquire the land, it creates total disarray to the life of the tribes as they are deprived of their livelihood as well as the social and cultural pattern of life embedded with the nature with the introduction into new system of

economy. The nature of these changes is getting importance from social scientist, human right activists and other considering the vulnerability of the tribes to marginalisation. Tribes are vulnerable because of their inhabite in the regions rich in the natural and mineral resources and their culture is characterised by the communal mode basis of living, ownership of property and mode of production. The specificity of their mode of production and living and their vulnerability to the socio-economic changes creates immense needs in the studies of tribes in recent years.

1.1 Research Problem:

There are 573 groups which are groups categorised as tribes, who have large variations including demographic features, as like their identity and culture. While there may be very large tribes like Bhils, Gonds or Santhals; there are very be smaller groups like that of Andamanese which constitute merely 40 in number. Even their levels of development in the area of technology, education or economy vary considerably. Apart from these differences, there are considerable commonalities of tribes like the relative isolation of their inhabitancy and subsistence economy symbiotically associated with nature.

The differences of socio-economic structure of the tribes in comparison to the non tribes can be seen in terms of 'primitive subsistence economy' of tribes which is embedded in their culture and ecology. The 'marginal economy' of the tribes is reflected in their simultaneous involvement in diverse occupations at a time only for subsistence. In this context, Mazumdar (1961) observed that the tribes use all different kinds of primitive occupations from hunting; food gathering, lumbering to shifting cultivation with domestication of Animals for their sustenance (ibid, 1961, p139) and it reflect the nature of their marginal economy as they have to use all different types of primitive occupations at a time for their livelihood. Thus, the economy of the tribes is marginal as single occupation cannot ensure their livelihood, which makes them more vulnerable to the change in their economy from outside if they are not compatible with tribal's life and culture.

All tribes do not have the primitive occupations. The difference in the level of economy among the tribes is visible in the two extreme of food gathering and hunting societies to modern agricultural and industrial societies.

The special feature of the tribal economy is use of simple technology symbiotically with natural environment where family works as unit of production as well as consumption which is existed within the co-operative structure of the community. The distribution is based on the gift and ceremonial exchange. The introduction of the cash economy has brought about total change to the structure of the tribal society (Planning Commission, 1992, p. 420). The introduction of the cash economy among the tribes creates changes in their interest and class structure along with the mode of control and ownership of the property. This was supplemented by the new form of administration by the British. The distinctive nature of tribal economy in relation to their social and cultural ethos and its changes over the period of time needs special attention in this context.

On the other hand, changes in the economy and society of tribes are introduced from the outside by the state or other agents associated with the state. The approach of the outsider towards tribes in this context is by the means of various development plans created for tribes. But these development plans are facing various structural problems in their adoption as they are not created keeping in mind the distinctive nature of socio-cultural organisation of tribes. There is continuous exploitation and creation of inequality among scheduled tribes both in latent and manifest form (Ibid). The mode of living of tribes is disrupted with the various developments projects that bring changes in terms of the large scale commercialisation of the resources in the areas inhabited by tribes and the introduction of the cash economy as the tribal mode of living had less association with them.

Therefore, the development projects are not able to give the desired benefits to the tribes as they are not compatible with the tribal life and culture. The gap between the existing realities on the ground and adopted policies is one of the main causes of their failure. Even planning commission has reported, 'the dwindling resource base of the tribal people in the shape of loss land , restriction on the access to forest produce , and the lack of opportunities for reasonable wage employment, have caused immense hardship to tribal people. Consequently, development inputs for the benefits of these people have made little impact. Significantly, the development project has, in many cases, interfered with traditional tribal institutions and ethos, and has produce negative results. These factors have significantly contributed to the dissatisfaction

amongst tribal people and simmering unrest in some tribal areas' (ibid, p. 420). Thus, large scale exploitation of natural resources due to development project in the areas inhabited by tribes creates hardship to the life of the tribes. But darker side of the projects is that they interfered with the institution and ethos of tribes that creates dissatisfaction and ultimately unrest among tribes.

Thus, tribes are conceptualised as distinct community with their society and economy symbiotically associated with nature and natural resources in a larger and direct manner. Nature is connected with the tribes not only for their livelihood but it is an integral part of their culture as depicted in the beliefs, practices, customs and ethos of the tribes that depicts the importance of nature in shaping their living. Their belief and practices are such that they acknowledge the importance of environment and their conservation. For example, the on the basis of customs associated with totemism, a particular tribe identify a specific object from nature as totem for them which is sacred from their perspective and needs obligation towards them. It ultimately helps in the conservation of the natural object. The changes brought in the tribal society in the name of development changed their nature of symbiotic association with nature as the development through industrialisation implies large scale use of natural resources for profit maximisation. The depleted natural resources are of concern to the tribal livelihood and culture because the tribes cannot adapt to new pattern of changes. The distinct nature of society and culture of tribes creates the interest in the changing circumstance not only for the tribal society but to the society as a whole. The question here is how the tribes and their development can be mutually compatible to each other as implied by the oft used term tribal development because the idea of development is closely connected with economic growth and the exploitation of natural resources.

1.2 Meaning of Development:

The study of the meaning of development is essential before we try to conceptualise the question of the tribal development.

Development has got varied meaning depending on the perspective adopted to understand it. Although, there are multiplicities of the meaning of development, but the basic meaning of development implies the process of change in the economic, social, political, moral, educational and physical structures of the whole society along with the value systems and the way of life of the people.

There is a shift in the meaning of development over the period of time depending on the changing social and political scenario. The understanding of the development especially after second world war have much impact on the human civilisation as it shaped the working of the world polity in a considerable degree when the direct colonialism started losing its foot. Still there is confusion over meaning of the development due to different senses in which the term has been used in daily as well as academic discourses.

The dictionary meaning of the word 'develop' is to expand; to bring out potentialities, capabilities, or to cause to come to completeness or perfection, and 'development' is gradual evolution or completion and the result of such an evolution or completion.

On the economic side, development implies economic growth which may be judged with various parameters such as industrialisation, urbanisation etc. On the political side, it implies establishment of the modern nation-states with the growth of democracy, rational bureaucracy and individual mentality. On the other hand, it implies spread of literacy or progress of scientific research at the cultural level. In short it has come to imply everything under modernisation which again has been synonymous to westernisation.

For J.D. Montgomery, 'development' is desirable change which is predicted or planned and administered or at least influenced by the government action. Here he asserted that development can not only mean growth but desirable change with economic growth. In this context, he referred to the needs of the social and the cultural change along with the economic growth for the developing countries of the Asia, Africa and Latin America (As quoted in Deogaonkar, 1994, p 25).

For Simon (1997), human development is the process of enhancing the individual and collective quality of life if it is able to satisfy the basic needs of the human being and is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable and is responsible for empowering the people to a considerable degree. (ibid)

The basic question raised against the development is that whether the processes of development able to meet the aspirations of the people who are suppose to empower through the means of development. The process of development initiated

from outside and their effect on the life of the people created interest among the social scientist as development which is not compatible with the society and culture of people is certain to bring disaster for them.

The question of freedom, liberation or emancipation is also seen in this context of basic human needs. Amartya Sen's idea participation also forms an important strand of development thinking. Sen (2000) stated that real development is one that will be able to expand the real freedoms of the people. In this context, he means that there should be freedom from poverty, hunger and malnutrition, from treatable disease and illiteracy. He also emphasised the need of political freedom in terms of freedom of free speech and opportunity to participate in forming government. He argued that economic growth may be important for achieving these freedoms but growth in itself alone is meaningless for development if it is not able to provide the desired freedom (ibid). An important question here is whether the world view and culture of the groups whose development we are concerned about is critical to the development process or is it merely process of exogenous change to which people just adjusts (Sujatha, 2001).

At present time, displacement of the people from land and livelihood constitute one of the worse manifestations of development. These are the basic problems which raises questions against the process of development.

1.3 Theories of Development:

There are attempts to equate the development with economic growth which means that development can be measured in terms of the increase in the per capita income. But economic growth and development cannot be equated as, although economic growth constitutes an important condition for development, it cannot be development in itself.

Development implies overall social, political and cultural well being of the people along with the economic growth. The overall development of an individual or a group has been issue of contestation on the basis of perspective adopted and the overall socio-economic context. Therefore, development of 'theories of development' over time has shown a shift in its meaning with the changing socio-economic scenario.

1.3a Classical Theories of Development:

The 'development' theory can be traced its origin to the post WWII period when the race for colonialism was changed to that of 'development'. But the origin of this line of thinking can be seen in the various writings from the 18th century onwards.

The theorists of the first generation include Adam Smith and David Ricardo.

Adam Smith's 'An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations' (1776) is the total philosophy of society and his work was in response to the economic policy of his time in Europe which focussed on trade. The emphasis on trade made the merchants and large trading companies to look for protection from the part of state in terms of high tariffs for imported goods thereby creating a market for the domestic goods. For him, this policy of the state regulation aimed at reducing the competitions, and is not beneficial for overall economic growth of the country but it could satisfy the interest of the only trading class. In this context, Smith emphasised the role of production in economic growth and said that the division of labour can go a long way in increasing the production of a country and ultimately the economic growth. His example of the manufacture of a pin shows that when ten people divides the process into 18 different parts, it can produce 48000 pins a day, whereas if each working on his own would have produced only a part of it. For him, breaking up production process into different steps can lead to skill development of individuals and thereby greatly increasing the production but it can also lead to the atomization and alienation in advanced division of labour which requires education for individual to make them free (ibid).

Smith, latter went onto argue the effect of market (or 'invisible hand of market') in regulating the overall system. He said that it is the price of goods or wages of labour which determines the overall system and as such his analysis of the effect of the market has given a new perspective to look at economic growth of a country (ibid).

David Ricardo was one of contemporary of Adam Smith and his theory of 'comparative advantage' is regarded as building block for creating the structural idea of free trade of modern period. Another version of 'division of labour', his theory said that a country should puts emphasis on producing goods which gets local

advantage in terms of assets of the country. Then this global division of labour can lead to global trade among the countries in terms of specialisation base on their positional advantage and he stated that this can lead to a more efficient use of scarce resources for the effective growth (Source: www.ecolib.org).

Thus the classical economist put maximum emphasis on the role of the market in the human well being through efficient use of resources.

But the changing circumstances of the 1920 are followed by WWII lead to the development of a line of thinking under the broad framework of ‘growth theory’.

1.3b. Background of the Theory of Economic growth:

The special circumstances that lead to the emergence of the growth theory had four elements (Preston, 1997, p 154): the intellectual influence of the work of the John Maynard Keynes, the emergence of the USA in the dominant position in the twentieth century, the Marshall Aid Programme and the reconstruction of the Europe and the demand for the nationalist developmentalism which was the ideology for the newly emerging nations.

The work of Keynes questioned the ‘laissez- faire’ scheme or ‘ the classical theories on market’ mainly because of the emergent situation of the continuous unemployment , misuse of resources and the emergence of the monopoly firms and he suggested for the government’s spending to meet the total expenditure which falls below the necessary level. He argued that high expenditure from the part of government would lead to higher level of economic activities which would help the debt return through the high tax payment. His emphasis on the regulation of the government is seen in the backdrop of the crisis of market and the success in USSR (ibid).

With the Publication of ‘The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money’ in 1936, Keynes argued that source of growth is real investment through the infrastructure projects rather than free market. In this context, he could see the important role of the state in the growth process (ibid).

The work of the Arthur Lewis is also of immense historical importance for the line of development thinking that has preoccupation on the economic growth. His

monograph, 'The Theory of Economic Growth' (1955) tries "...to provide an appropriate framework for study of economic development" (p 5) and in the process he explains mainly the proximate and the non proximate factors contributing to the economic growth. He identified the effort to economise; the increase of knowledge and its application and the increases of capital and other sources per head (p 11) as proximate causes of growth and on the other hand, for him, remote causes includes psychological, religious , political and other institutional factors.

For Lewis, economic system can be divided into two sectors: one is the capitalist area of industry and major extensive agriculture; the other is the relatively small sale agriculture and unorganised service sector and the small scale industry sector. The rate of capital accumulation works as major source of difference between two sectors which is also related with the transference of the labour to the capitalist sector. He goes onto argue that the growth of the capitalist sector is at the expense of the subsistence sector which is ultimately absorbed by capitalist sector (ibid).

But against the basic premises of the growth theory, there are attempts to go beyond the economic growth to include the social, cultural and political factors in assessing the development. The search for institutional and the cultural factors which are suitable for the economic development have more close linkages with the modernisation theory.

1.3c. Modernisation Theory:

Modernisation theory constitute an important part of the development thinking up to mid 1960's and is developed in the US as an alternative to the Marxist account of social development.

Here 'tradition' and 'modernity' are seen as bipolar and hence are differentiated on the basis of values and institutions. It explained that all societies were destined to common goal of technical and industrial progress induced by industrialisation.

Thus, there is an ideological celebration of the west in the sense that it assumed the shift of the less developed countries and their patterns of life in the model of the developed countries. Logic of industrialism in this sense depicts an ethnocentrism. Thus, this dichotomous characterisation is highly criticised as model

of traditional society is presented in the ways in which such societies are different from modern (Frank, 1969).

1.3c (i). Linear Stages Theory:

W.W. Rostow, an economic historian in his highly debatable work 'The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto' (1960) provides an important contribution to the line of development thinking grouped as modernisation school. The modernisation process, for him, take place with the shift from the agricultural societies with 'traditional' cultural practices to the rational, industrial service focussed economy and he stressed that development is to take place in the capitalist context rather than communist one (Rostow, 1960).

Rostow identified five stages of economic growth and he stated that: "It is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within one of the five categories" (Rostow, 1960, 4).

For him, the first stage of economic history is characterised by traditional society which have agricultural base, clan base polity and fatalistic mentality. Rostow explained the conditions of the traditional society with the words: "One whose structure is developed within limited production functions, based on pre Newtonian science and technology, and on pre Newtonian attitudes towards the physical world" (ibid, 4).

Second stage is the 'Pre-conditions for take-off' into self sustained growth is established in the Western Europe in the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth century when the change occur with the growth of Newtonian Science followed by the development of the trade. Rostow saw the role of the external factors in this change when he stated that pre condition for growth established 'not endogenously, but from some external intrusion of more advanced societies' (ibid, 6).

The third stage is the 'take off stage, in which technology applied to narrow group of industries and the rate of investment increases with the economic growth. He stated that, within a period of twenty years, rate of investment rises from five percent to more than ten percent of the output along with the development of the substantial manufacturing sector. It 'is the interval when the old blocks and the resistances to steady growth are finally overcome" (ibid, 7). This stage also marks the emergence of

political and social framework which “exploits the impulses to expansion in the modern sector” (1960, 39).

When the ‘magic of compound interest’ gets built into the special structure, ‘the drive to maturity’ stage begins. For Rostow, this stage shows the investment of ten to twenty percent of the national income in the production process. This leads to the maturity of the industrial sector and the consequent change and the institutional arrangements. This stage also shows the transition to the home generated technologies (ibid).

The end stage is the stage of ‘high mass consumption’. This stage has the characteristics of social welfare state with more focus of consumer goods and services (ibid).

The theory put forward by Rostow was criticised as being abstract and we see that the empirical generalisation of the stages is not possible.

1.3d. Structuralism and Dependency Theory:

There are a variety of approaches from the classical Marxism to the neo Marxists which are known as dependency theory, world system theory and the underdevelopment theory (Harrison, 1988, 62).

1.3d(i). Marxist Theories of Development:

Neither Marx, nor Engel had any special interest on the third world development and their main interest was always on the western capitalism. In this context, Marx’s theory of development is similar to the linear stages models of economic development especially that of modernisation theorist. Historical change was well evident in his writings when he stated that ‘the country that is more developed industrially only shows to less developed the image of its own future’(Marx, 1954, 19).

The main focus of the Marx’s work is ‘mode of Production’ with different ‘forces of production’ and ‘relation of production’ and the specificity of the mode of production which lead to capitalism, which is different from the pre-capitalism stages of ‘Asiatic’, ‘Ancient’ or ‘Feudal’ and the post capitalism stage marked by socialism.

The pre capitalist stages of production are characterised by subsistence form of production and the production of 'surplus value' is the main characteristics of the capitalist mode of production. In capitalism, as Marx stated, bourgeoisie own 'means of production', while the proletariat own nothing but his own labour power. He further stated that amount of wages paid to the proletariat is always less than that of value of commodities produced by the proletariat through his labour and this surplus value is appropriated by the bourgeoisie in the form of profit (ibid).

For Marx, this inherent contradiction in the 'mode of production' will lead to the overthrow of the capitalism by the socialism where the workers will work according to their ability and will be paid according to their need (ibid).

1.3d (ii). Paul Baran and Under Development Theory:

Paul Baran is one of the main thinkers of the 'Neo-Marxist School' who applied the Marxist ideas to study the world conditions in the mid- twentieth century.

Baran (1960) in his work 'The Political Economy of Growth' stated that Capitalist system which was once the mighty engine of the economic development now stands in the way of further growth (ibid).

The first part of the book shows the inherent irrationalities and the contradictions of the industrial capitalism while the second part of the book shows how economic stagnation in the third world is perpetuated by these inherent contradictions of the industrial capitalism via Imperialism. He stated that most of the colonisers were 'rapidly determined to extract the largest possible gains from the host countries, and to take their loot home (Baran, 1957, 274). Thus, capitalist development in the west is responsible for the underdevelopment of the third world (ibid).

According to the Baran, the present system will not help the third world countries to escape the fate. Development is possible only through socialist transformation as it can restructure the socio-economic institutions to produce potential economic surplus thereby taking the country in the path of progress. For him, socialist planning is the 'rational solution' and 'self evident truth' (Baran, 1960, 119).

Another major work of Baran and Sweezy (1968) is 'Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order', where capitalism is regarded as 'monopoly capitalism' because the large companies dominated the world economy thereby exploiting the poorer countries. It is observed that, monopoly in this context means the oligopoly. He described the conditions in the words "a large scale enterprise producing a significant share of the output of an industry, or even several industries, and able to control its prices, the volume of its production, and the types and amount of its investment" (ibid, 6).

Authors' attack on the capitalism is different from the Marxian attack on the capitalism. Besides producing income inequalities and real poverty, for Baran and Sweezy, capitalism also leads to the degradation of the quality of life –like housing and the transportation system, education structure, family and the personal relations of Americans.

The contradiction lies here is that, although there is periodic concerns for 'social problems' but the effort to solve them will come in conflict with the ideology of the private profit maximisation, corporate freedom and the government's commitment to the business interest of the society.

They stated the need of the government of the poorer economics to intervene but the problem lies in that such governments are either corrupt or powerless to prevent the exploitation. They propose state socialist system as the remedy to the problems of the world capitalist system which can make the development possible.

1.3e. Dependency Theory:

Dependency theory encompasses within its realm a set of theories which stated that the failure of the third world states to achieve adequate and the sustainable level of development is due to their dependence on the advanced capitalist world.

This line of thinking emerged in opposition to the world system theory and they maintained that western societies are always interested to sustain their advantageous position in various ways, which may be through 'draining surplus' as stated by Andre Gunder Frank. For him, 'the development of underdevelopment' is due to dependence of the peripheral states or 'satellite' on the more advanced 'metropolises'.

Over emphasis on the economic factors, thereby neglecting the role of the social factors is regarded as the main weakness of the dependency theory. But these theories are able to provide an international dimension to the development theory by looking into the power dynamics of the states.

1.3e (i) Andre Gunder Frank and ‘Development of Underdevelopment’:

Andre Gunder Frank was one of the major dependency theorists, whose work on the metropolitan extraction of the surplus from the peripheral states is seen as a departure from the works of the modernisation theorists.

In the book, ‘ Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America’ (1967), he stated that the surplus produced in the third world is appropriated by the advanced capitalist countries through the means of transnational corporations and this lead to the stagnation of the third world economics. For Frank, the remedy lies in detaching the ties with the capitalism and thereby having auto centric development strategies (ibid).

Another major work of Frank is ‘On Capitalist Underdevelopment’ (1975) which also has emphasis on the Frank’s continuous emphasis on the inevitability of the underdevelopment and development as the product of the capitalism. He stated: “All serious study of the problems of the development of the underdeveloped areas and all serious intent to formulate policy for the elimination of the underdevelopment and for the promotion of the development must take into account, and must begin with, the fundamental historical and the structural cause of underdevelopment in capitalism” (Frank, 1975, 96).

Frank could see three contradictions in the capitalist development and the development of the underdevelopment (ibid). The first contradiction is in the expropriation of the economic surplus from the hands of those who actually produce it and thus it is transferred from the peripheries to the centre. This leads to the second contradiction of development, as it led to development of the polarity by means of ‘development’ and ‘underdevelopment’ within same capitalism. Third contradiction lies here is that, we have to see the circumstance of the Latin American underdevelopment has taken in historical and the structural conditions of the capitalism itself (ibid).

With the review of the various phases of the history of the Latin America, Frank goes onto conclude that, only the socialist revolution can be the remedy.

1.3f. The World System Approach:

The World System Approach is a historical description of the growth of the capitalist economic system, from centre to the periphery. This is the result of the works of the Immanuel Wallerstein and his colleagues.

World system theory emanates by questioning inadequacies of the dependency theory. It tries to provide the sociological explanation to the expansion of the capitalism across the globe. The basic argument of the world system analysis is that of global organisation of capitalism rather than national, and in that way industrially developed core regions exploits the periphery by the means of exploiting raw materials. He further argues that the modern economic system is the basic of the international political order.

Wallerstein in his book ‘The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century’ (1974), discusses how the capitalism has emerged as a world system in the sixteenth century and he argues that the present day functioning and contradictory tendencies of world capitalism can be understood only in the context of the historical development of the capitalism. In this context, he posits that, rather than advocating sovereign state as unit of analysis, there is a need to have a world system perspective (ibid).

The capitalist world economy of the sixteenth century is as the geographical division of the labour where the sovereign states constitute individual units. Here small number of ‘core’ states specialises in the capitalist agriculture and the industrial production of the various kinds, while the ‘peripheral’ areas specialises in the export of the primary products to the core areas. Between these two areas lies ‘semi-peripheral states’ whose system of production is intermediate between core and the peripheral countries. He argues that the capital formation of the ‘core’ countries is always at the expense of the ‘peripheral’ and the ‘semi peripheral countries’ (ibid).

He stated, “the periphery of the world economy is that geographical sector of it wherein production is primarily of lower ranking goods ...but which is the integral part of the overall system of division of labour, because the commodities involved are

essential for daily use... the external arena of a world economy...consist of those other world systems with which the given world economy has a some kind of trade relationship, based primarily on the exchange priorities (ibid, pp301-2; pp199-200)).

Wallerstein further posited that the social organisation of the 'core', 'periphery' and the 'semi-periphery' countries are much dependent on their position in the world economy and it ultimately decides the state apparatus, mode of labour control etc.

Finally, he goes on to see functioning of the interdependent states in the European world economy. Here the development of some states necessitates the underdevelopment in some other areas.

Thus, the work of Wallerstein has thrown light on the process of unequal exchange and development and it lead to the primitive accumulation of the capital.

The study of the theories of development clearly reflects the change in the line of thinking over the period of time. This change is not only the change in academic pursuit, but the change in the global socio-economic as well as political scenario. The differences between the regions are manifested in the line of thinking and are largely proved by development theories. For example, while the modernisation theory praised the western society, underdevelopment theory tries to situate the conditions of the third world in the world structure to explain their situation. This diversity of the theories of development not only shows the complexity of the concept but also the lack of comprehensive theory which could explain the development in all historical period and all societies of the globe. It also shows the need to go beyond the simple meaning of development to understand the specificity of each society in the specific context or in relation to broader context. This also means that without understanding the social, economic, political and cultural reality of the society, any conceptualisation or operationalisation of development can be disastrous.

1.4. Culture and Development:

In development thinking, culture was never accorded important place. Development was taken merely as the outcome of economic growth which neglects the structural realities on the ground that sometimes leads to maladjustment of the development programmes with the ground realities. It is now well accepted that the

development projects that do not incorporate life style and world view of the indigenous communities, local institutional framework of the resource management will not lead to socially desirable result which will be well accepted to all the groups.

In this context Mathur (1995) has noted, “The cultural dimensions of development do not normally receive the attention of those people who deal with development. Such concerns often meet with apprehension, scepticism or simply lack of interest. For development officials, the criteria for achievement, growth and processes are unfortunately predominantly quantitative, shaped by economic factors and by some social indicators, culture is unquantifiable, therefore neglected (Mathur, 1989).

There is a need to have emphasis on the culture of the people for whom development programmes are designed to have positive result.

1.4a.Cultural Critique of Development:

Nandy (2003) while providing a cultural critique of the development said that there are four responses to development that are needed to take into consideration while providing the cultural critique of development. They are: Developmentalism, Critical Developmentalism, Alternative development and Beyond development.

Nandy sees Developmentalism as the first visible sign of breaking away from the ideology development. He said that it is the first intellectual and political sign of the post development era (ibid).

The basic assumption of developmentalism according to Nandy is that it believes development to be universal text, like that of the modern science and that development is the fate of all societies. As Nandy said, “First, the social cost of development cannot be equitably and justly distributed. Unfortunately but inevitably, the weaker sections of the society pay a disproportionately heavy cost for development.....Second, all societies can be accommodated in the developed world at some future date, for modern science will release unforeseen productive capacities over the next few decades” (ibid).

But in the second response, termed as Critical Developmentalism, Nandy says that it assumes the development to be perfectly healthy concept which is distorted

because of the political, social and cultural forces which try to contextualise development. So, it means that the problems of the development can be corrected by the means of the social, economic and cultural engineering in the third world and it can reduced the costs of development from the poor and the underprivileged (ibid). The positive side of this response is that it sees the role of external factors such as global capitalism in the inequity and injustice in the societies and it sees the possibilities of breaking up these links. It also follows that the pathologies of development such as large scale consumerism, ecological insensitivity and weaknesses of the middle class mass culture will automatically wither away once state assume the role of the protector of the people (ibid).

The third response is Alternative Development which is more critical to development as it negates the distinctiveness of the cultural configuration and assuming that the experience of the developed world can be the experience of the entire human future. Thus, it tries to liberate development from the economic and historical biases (ibid). The best part of the response is that it sees suffering of poor and powerless in the process of development is possible only by substantially modifying the idea of development itself and thus this asks for a development which is more culture-sensitive and culture-specific (ibid).

The fourth response to development, as Nandy see it is that it assumed the development as flawed and hence non retrievable. He means that development is similar form of domination and exploitation like older form of colonialism or nationalism but in more emancipator manner. He further argues that what is happening to the life support system and the culture of the victims of the development is similar to the victims of the colonialism. (ibid)

Nandy argue that the fourth response insists “when development becomes incompatible with cultural traditions, the latter should have priority over the former. Not because such traditions are ever perfect but because they are close to the ways of real-life people and are more accessible to and more restrained by participatory politics and the democratic process” (ibid, 164).

While discussing the responses to development, Nandy argue that response in terms of Alternative development and Beyond development are sensitive to the relation between the culture and the development. The basic premise of assuming that

the cultures of the southern world are causing hindrance to the development is common flaw (ibid). Thus, the cultural critique of development implies that the development should be culturally sensitive for the achieving its goal. The idea of tribes and tribal development come in this context as tribe is conceptualised in terms of its distinctive culture that necessitate proper attention to understand it development.

1.5. Conceptualising Tribes and Tribal Development:

Tribes constitute an important part of Indian population both demographically as well as socio-politically. The study of Indian society that neglects the tribal component is bound to fail in understanding the complete picture of society.

According to 2001 census, the schedule tribes population of the country is 8.43crore which is 8.2 % of the total population, residing in the 15% of the country's area in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions. There are 700 scheduled tribes notified under article 342 of the constitution. The tribes also vary in the level of socio-economic and education development. While some of them have adopted a mainstream way of life, but some other (75 in number) are designated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribes Groups because of their low stage of their socio-economic development characterised by a pre-agrarian level of technology; a stagnant or declining population, extremely low literacy, and a subsistence level of economy (Annual Report, 2010-11).

Conceptualisation of the tribes is major issue of dissent among the social scientists and the changing socio-political situation and perspective make it very complex. We may delineate two lines of thinking about the tribes: Politico-administrative and Social Science Approach.

The politico administrative-approach mainly means the approach of understanding of the 'tribes', both by the colonial government and the post independent Indian state. The understanding of 'tribes' through the means of ethnographic classification and enumeration by the colonial administrators and ethnographers was the starting point for understanding the hitherto unknown society. Also, British motive was exclusively for the convenience in their administration, but there is a major impact of these works on the conceptualisation of the 'tribes' which influenced some scholars to take tribes as 'colonial construction' (Xaxa, 2008).

In the post independence period, the term 'tribes' assumed the meaning of 'scheduled tribes' from the Indian Constitution and through the process of 'positive discrimination'. The meaning of 'tribes' thus transcended the simple politico-administrative understanding and it assumed the meaning of political resource or the tool to gain protection and concessions.

Article 366(25) of the Indian constitution refers schedule tribes as those communities, who are scheduled in accordance with article 342 of the constitution. According to article 342 only those communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending act of parliament will be considered to be scheduled tribes.

The essential characteristics, first listed by the Lokur committee for a community to be identified as scheduled tribes are: indication of primitive traits, distinctive culture, shyness of contact with the community at large, geographical isolation, backwardness (Annual Report, 2010-11). The use of criteria of 'backwardness' to designate the tribes in a official report needs critical engagement.

On the other hand, social science understanding of the tribes reflects the broader meaning of tribes as 'distinct community', they helps to go beyond the administrative framework of constitution and the British administrator and helps to understand tribes in the broader framework of social, economic and political organisation of society at large.

The presence of tribes in isolation is seen as special feature of the tribes. But, in the context of India, this attribute of 'isolation' cannot use as it is, because there are many tribes groups in India which have close association with other communities.

Another aspect of tribal society is the presence of common dialect which differentiated it from other tribal groups. Common culture is another attribute of tribal society and they are demarcated with common arts, beliefs and practices, which are acquired by the member of particular society. But for Beteille, this cultural boundary is not prominent. He stated that-'the tribal is society having a clear linguistic boundary and generally a well defined political boundary. It is within the latter that the regular determinate the way of acting are imposed on its members. The tribes also

has a cultural boundary, much less well defined and this is the general frame for the mores, folkways, the formal and informal interactions of these members' (ibid).

The importance of the kinship organisation within tribes also differentiates it from other societies. The kinship organisation in tribes determines the role of men and women in their society. Social organisation on the basis of age, sex and kinship is quite pronounced.

Again, the Tribal society is differentiated from others on the basis of principle that emphasis equalitarianism (Gupta, 1986). Dipankar Gupta stated that equalitarian principle among tribes is based on the logic of distribution rather than on the production lines. For Gupta, this is the main reason why tribes are devoid of exploitation in the in-group (ibid). The economy of the tribes is characterised by their culture of communal mode of living that is more inclined to meet the needs of whole community rather than emphasising on the individual gain. The communal mode of ownership and economic activity which is predominant in tribal society till recent times coupled with the symbiotic association with the nature and natural resources gave less scope for exploitation in the tribal society. But the changes brought about in the tribal society as well as to the society as large have brought phenomenal changes in such a pattern of living, mainly to the disappointment to the tribes.

These specificities of the tribal situation have lead to the creation of the special interest for the study of change in the tribal society. The tribes are generally free from any outside influence by residing in geographically inaccessible terrain and thereby without any threat to the culture and livelihood. But, the modern education, means of communication, increasing involvement in the national political system lead to the creation of the feeling of 'minority' in the tribes society vis-s-vis outsider. But this identity crisis is very much context specific. Political and administrative structure of the country during colonial and post colonial period has great impact on the political as well as economic set up of the tribes' society.

Thus the contact of the tribes with the other ethnic groups by the means of rapid transformation of the communication scenario have lead to the transformation of the tribal economy and society and it ultimately responsible for the creation of the tension within tribal society itself. The introduction of the tribes to the outside situation and communities has brought about multi-dimensional changes in the tribal

society. In this context, B.K. Roy Burman stated –“Currently, another transformation seems to be taking place among section of the tribes population with massive commercialisation of resources on which tribes traditionally depended to a considerable extent for their livelihood and at the same time with small number of entrepreneurs coming up among the tribes communities claims of being autochthonous of their respective habitats , which may or may not be historically correct in all cases , are becoming focal points of political, social and cultural mobilisation of many tribes communities” (ibid).

Thus, tribal economy and their culture constitute two main domains of tribal development and its transformation. The question lie here is how the change of economy will be more compatible with tribal culture, or to be more specific, does not create crisis in the tribal culture.

The distinctive nature of tribes and its social organisation albeit of its internal differences is clearly demonstrated by the various studies. The need is to devise the framework for proper conceptualisation of the tribes’ context. It is necessary for the devising the tribal development that will be compatible with their culture.

1.5a Meaning of Tribal Development:

The specificity of the tribal economy is needed to be taken into consideration if we want to understand the meaning of tribal development. Although there are large number of internal variations seen within the tribal groups itself, but the tribes as a whole characterised by largely self sufficient, unstructured and nonspecialised economy. The symbiotic relation of the tribes with nature constitutes an important component of their identity that necessitates attention in the study of the tribal development. The specificity of tribes and tribal culture is the domain that needs attention if we consider the distinct nature of tribal society and tribal development.

An important feature of the tribal society is that they generally live in the remote inaccessible areas such as forests and hills which not only shaped their livelihood patterns but their culture as well. It does not imply that the case of all tribes is similar. There is great diversity in the occupational patterns among the tribes itself as there are some tribes groups who are in the stage of food gathering or hunting stage in comparison to other groups who are not distinguishable from the people doing

modern cultivation. But apart from these variations, the commonality in terms of economy is well perceived.

The tribal economy is characterised by the use of the simple technology in the production process where family works both as unit of production as well as consumption. Another feature of the tribal economy is the absence of the profit motive to a large extent and the presence of periodical markets. Low level of monetisation and presence of barter system are other important characteristics of tribal economy.

On the other hand, tribes face some problems with respect to policy adopted for their development as they failed to incorporate the tribal culture in their formulation of policies that leaves negative impact on the tribal society as a whole.

There is another dimension to the specificity of the situation of tribes. The land and forest are not only the means of livelihood for the tribes but also forms an integral part of their cultural existence as evidenced from the daily activities directly related to them. The communal ownership of property especially the land and forest resources shape their identity but it also deprives the tribes of the legal ownership right when the situation arises to take the resources away by the outsiders. Although, there are some protective measures which could safeguard the resources of tribes, there are several ways within standard procedures to dupe the tribal and depriving them of the ancestral land rendering them landless labour. They end up working as construction workers or engaged in other unorganised sectors, thereby creating a situation of marginalisation.

It is seen that the development processes have come in conflict with the traditional tribal institutions and ethos and it works in ultimate agony to the tribes. Even the documents of the planning commission have remarked that “the dwindling resource base of the tribal people in the shape of loss of land, restriction on access to forest produce, and the lack of opportunities for reasonable wage employment, have caused immense hardship to the tribal people. Consequently, development inputs for the benefits of these people have made little impact. Significantly the development process has, in many cases, interfered with the traditional tribal institutions and ethos, and has produced negative results. These factors have significantly contributed to the

dissatisfaction amongst tribal people and simmering unrest in some tribal areas” (Government of India, Eight Five year Plan, p 420).

The problem with the development projects is that they are aimed at the elimination of poverty without taking in to consideration the endogenous creativity of the groups and thus lacking the cultural sensibility. The much discussed tribal ethos is geared to mutual trust as it emerges from face to face relations and community solidarity which makes them vulnerable to exploitation. It is also important to note that not only traders and merchants or companies exploit the tribals. Often state projects of development cause very great displacement with very little compensation. Their culture is characterised by the economy where they are directly dependent on the natural resources like land and forest for earning their livelihood and when they are dispossessed of these natural resources, it creates the situation where socio-cultural and economic world view is no more compatible with the existing situation. In this context, Dube (1998) urged for the need of the development strategy which can be more sensitive to the tribal culture and will not be suicidal for them. He said, “development strategy that skirts around poverty, speaks of social justice in low whisper and underplays an endogenous creativity cannot be sustained...the worst sufferer in the process will be the tribes, whose problems need sensitive handling. For them we need economically effective and culturally sensitive plans of participatory development. It would be suicidal to ride roughshod over tribal interests and ways of life in the name of national development” (ibid, 1998). Thus, he advocated for a policy which not only take care of the cultural interest of the tribes but also make them partner of the development process.

When we see the issue of tribal development, the question of ecology also forms an important part. There is raising concern about the neglect of the environmental issues and the conflict between ethnic groups and environment that may arise in the process of development. There is lack of studies on these issues except few of the recent studies of ecological history of India by Guha (1989), Guha and Gadgil(1992). (Nongbri, 2003) Although these studies were able to depict the divergence between the western development paradigm and the system of resource use and resource conservation, there is dearth of studies which are aimed specifically to study the effect of development on the social and environmental landscape of tribes (ibid, 40). In this context, Nongbri (2003) have given several factors for this lacuna,

“Firstly, the heterogeneity of tribes both in ethno-cultural and geographical terms demanded intensive and well-coordinated studies of different communities. Secondly, with the increasing exposure to the forces of development and change, the tribal societies have themselves have become more complex with deepening differentiation emerging along class, ethnicity and gender lines, growing politicisation, and sharp erosion of the social institutions and knowledge systems” (Ibid, 40).

1.6. Land, Forest and Tribal Development: Issues of Marginalisation:

The relation of the tribes with the land and forest is very substantial considering the subsistence primitive occupation carried out by most of the tribes (Roy Burman, 1994; Xaxa, 2008). Land and forest are two most important pillars of tribal life and livelihood and it was like their ‘philosophy of life’ (Rao, 1987, 89; also quoted in Ambagudia, 2010, 61).

The tribes are defined as groups that live in the simple and primitive conditions characterised by the dependence on the nature for survival and livelihood. Their close relation is reflected in terms of their physical, social and cultural proximity with nature. These proximate relations are reflected in their symbiotic relation with nature (Fernandes, 1993, as referred by Xaxa, 2008). The relation of the tribes with nature is explained by Xaxa (2008) in two ways: first is the representation of the environment in the cultural domain of the tribes as seen in the numerous riddles, stories, myths, legends, feasts and festivals that the tribes performs (ibid,102). The second is the existential condition of the living of the tribes with nature in which tribes are relate to the environment and nature for day to day existence (ibid).

The predominance of the primary occupations among the tribes means that they are still live off the land and forest. As such, they form most important and integral part of their life and livelihood. The socio-economic and the cultural conditions are also shaped by their close relation with nature and vice versa. But over the period of time, changes have been introduced mainly from outside whereby the close and symbiotic relation of the tribes with natural resources has broken. This change have been seen by Fernandes as change from the constructive to destructive dependence where the traditional symbiotic relation of the tribes with nature is destroyed because of the industrial clear felling and displacement for development projects (ibid).

Some people argue that the close relation that the tribes had with the nature and natural resources over the history was broken with the advent of colonialism as colonial administration's approach was formulated to meet their structural demands, rather than emphasising on the local specificity of the society. (Sunder, 2008) Thus, the non emphasis on the specificity of the culture of the tribe by the colonialism leads to break down of the close relation of the tribe with nature. This change brings changes not only in their relation with nature but whole pattern of social and cultural life of the tribes.

In the Indian context, we see that the conflict between the traditional system of ownership of property and British Administrative policies created the situation where the introduction of the cash economy and market forces take place in a more prominent manner. As a result, communal ownership pattern of the resources is changed to private ownership with utter agony to the tribes (Nongbri, 2003). This is also associated with greater social implication as resources like land is not only means of livelihood for the tribes but associated with culture as its possession signify prestige besides having a holistic knowledge of land, natural resources and environment over the generation (Elwin, 1963, 50; also quoted in Ambagudia , 2010, 61).

But the introduction of the colonial administration brought changes in such control and ownership patterns. The tribes had communal ownership of land and forest. Over the period of time the social organisation of the tribes which was embedded in the communal ownership of property lost their earlier importance. Besides land became saleable which led to the new class formation in the society of tribes on the basis of ownership and non ownership of property. These changes brought impoverishment to the life of tribes. Scholar like Roy Burman (1994) see it as broader issue of conversion of historical rights into privileges and concessions, erosion of moral authority of the village community and the promotion of the neo-feudalism (ibid, 1994, 143).

Similar pattern of changes can be observed in the agricultural situation also. The unique situation of the tribal agriculture in the various structural conditions such as organisation of production, ecology, demography, external relations, level of technology and management, but such agrarian situation is undergoing sharp change

with the affect of introduction of market forces, alien traders, money lender and merchants along with 'informal' economy (Pathy, 1992, 208). These changes in the agriculture are not compatible to the tribal mode of production and ownership pattern. Thus they create agony in their life instead of making any positive change as the changes reduce the chances of the subsistence mode of agriculture for a large section of the tribes.

In this context, we can see the important case of shifting cultivation which is regarded as one of the most primitive form of agriculture due to the nature of technology followed by tribes in shifting cultivation. Although the practice of shifting cultivation is criticised from the various grounds saying that it is unviable mode of agriculture considering unsustainable land use, it is necessary to understand that it is most practical method of cultivation in the hill areas which have evolved over the years of experience and knowledge of the tribes over the environment (Mishra, 1976, 80-84; Bhowmik, 1976, 8; Xaxa, 2008, 104).

Also, the change from the shifting to settle cultivation will bring about far reaching changes in the ownership pattern of property and ultimately the class structure which is totally opposed to the tribal social organisation (Pathy, 1992).

Similar is the case of forest. The close association of the tribes with the forest is seen not only in getting their livelihood, but their way of life, customs, practices are associated with their environment and more specifically with their forest. The main livelihood of tribes is closely associated with forest as can be seen in case of collection of food. Apart from rice, dal, and vegetable which form the staple food of the tribes, they also take various leaves, flowers, seeds, roots, and fruits collected from forest as part of their diet (Xaxa, 2008). Tribes are dependent of the forest for the collection of the various raw materials for construction of houses, various implements and tools etc from the forest (ibid). As Xaxa have mentioned, "Most tribal households have items such as paddy-husking contraptions, mats, cots, wooden stools, baskets, cups, plates, cushions, ropes, mortar and pestles, and oil presses, all of which are made from forest produce. Even art objects, artefacts, musical instruments, and ornaments are made from forest produce. In fact, the whole material culture of tribes is rooted in the tribal people's dependence on forest and forest produce. Their ties with forest cannot be severed without destroying their entire way of life" (ibid, 103).

This exemplifies the close and intricate relation that the tribes have with the forest. On the cultural side, the relation of the tribes with forest is visible in form of various stories, riddles, songs and dances that signifies the close relation of the tribes with forest. So, when the tribes are deprived of the forest resources, through the various ways such as forest policies or the clearing of the forest for industrialisation, it not only deprives the forest dweller of their source of livelihood, but from their culture as well (ibid). It led to the marginalisation of the tribes.

Thus, there is a shift from the symbiotic relation between forest and tribes to that of destructive dependence due to industrial clear felling and the displacement of the people by the development projects (Fernandes, 1993, 48). Even the forest administration have adopted the policies which are more beneficial to meet the revenue aim of the department and the government, rather than meeting the needs of the tribal groups who are associated with the forest symbiotically for so long time. It results in two processes: on the one hand it causes the massive destruction to the forest and on the other hand dispossessed the vulnerable groups like tribes of the means of their livelihood (Fuch, 1992; Xaxa, 2008).

Thus, the tribes are dispossessed of the land and forest that constituted most important part of their life and livelihood. This dispossession is studied in the political ecology framework which states that issues of social equity and justice are at risk in the process of national development. It also means the asymmetries of power over the exploitation of the natural resources, thus dispossessing the group who may have the close relation with the natural resources but without any power to control them (Bernstein, 1990, also referred in Baviskar, 2003, 5052).

1.7. Survey of literature:

It may be pertinent to look at the literature on tribal development against the background of the foregoing discussion. The study of social structure and culture in development is the focus of study in the literature on tribal development. They mainly emphasised the need of giving importance to specific social structure and culture in devising the development policies for various communities.

Elwin's approach towards tribes was initially put forward in his book 'The Baiga' (1939), which was forwarded to the pamphlet 'The Aboriginal' (1944). He

advocated policy of 'isolation' for the greater benefits of tribes. His policy of isolation for tribes was based on the assumption that the tribes are vulnerable to the forces of modernisation and change. In this context, he even opposed the work of the Christian missionaries and the reformist Hindus alike thinking them to have affected on the tribes culture and tradition. In the book 'The Baiga', he advocated the strategy of 'National Park' for them so that they will not submerge into Hindu fold and can continue their own religious and economic practices (ibid).

But approach advocated by Elwin towards tribes in his book 'The Baiga' was highly criticised by the Indian scholars and seen it as strategy of the imperialists to divide the country. Ghurye (1943; 1963), vehemently criticised the 'national park' approach of the Elwin. He remarked that the tribes were the backward Hindus and they should be assimilated into the Hindu civilisation. He (1980) even criticised the approach of 'isolation' for the present state of turmoil in the North Eastern part of India.

Ghurye termed Elwin as 'isolationist' and 'no changer', 'who wished to see the aborigines reinstated in their original ways irrespective of any other consideration' (Ghurye, 1943; also quoted in Ghurye 1999, 157; as quoted in Nongbri, 2003, 26).

Against this approach, Ghurye advocated the policy of 'assimilation' and thereby accepted the tribes as 'Backward Hindus' and he argued that process of assimilation could bring them into the civilisation.

While replying to these criticisms, Elwin (1960b), said that his use of the 'national park' connotation is unfortunate and he said that the little population of the Baiga left in 1939, i.e at the time of writing the book made him desperate to use such connotation. He said that his advocacy was more related with protecting them from exploitation and oppression. He later shifted his argument for the policy of isolation saying that such policy is meant for only such group who have very less population. On the other hand, for the majority of the tribes, he said that the same policy used for the general population can be used (Elwin, 1960b). Elwin later maintained that he had no intention to keep the tribes as 'museum species' or to affect the integrity of the country (ibid).

In another book, 'The Burning Caldron of North East India' (1980), Ghurye said that the 'isolationist policy' advocated by Elwin is responsible for the turmoil in the North east region.

On the other hand, Majumdar (1961) suggested the maintenance the cultural identity of the tribes as far as possible. He was for 'selected integration' of the tribes as if the 'isolation' of the tribes is completely broken it may lead to the complete lose of ethnic identity of the tribes. By 'selected integration', he meant that only those elements of the civilisation should be allowed to enter into the tribal areas which have relevance to the tribal life and it may keep the tribes away from the vices of the urban life (ibid).

For Roy Burman (1978), process of tribal integration in the present context mainly means independent thinking, democratic style of life, secularism and planned economy. He maintained that these four things are urgently required so that the tribes can be integrated to the mainstream society (ibid).

The study of tribal economy is also of immense interest considering its specificity that is characterised by subsistence production that has symbiotic relation with nature. Shah (1969) in his study of tribal economy of Gujarat pointed out tribal economy is characterised by very less diversification of the occupation. His study, which was based on the All India Rural Development and Investment Survey of the RBI (1961-62) also pointed out that agriculture is the main occupation of the tribes which is characterised by very simple technology in terms of the very less investment, less inputs for increasing productivity of land, and high dependence on the traditional credit agencies. These characteristics make the tribal economy a subsistence type (ibid).

Heredia (1995) maintained the need for preserving the cultural identity of the tribes along with redressing the issue of their minority status to address the dilemma of tribal development. He maintained that, "if the developmental dilemma that confronts our tribes is to be successfully addressed, tribal integration require their mobilization not just to preserve their cultural autonomy but to redress their minority status as well" (ibid). He stated that this is essential for the participation of the tribes in their own development and education has a major role to play in the whole process.

The changes in the tribal economy are seen as it is inevitable. But the affect of these changes on the tribal life needs special attention. Roy Burman (1973) had some important observation regarding the modernisation of the tribes in the India's border. He stated that the tribes are different from the non-tribes inspite of sharing same

region and they only have a formal contact with the non-tribes. He further stated that the forces of modernisation made them to adopt modern skills and technology to a less extent but still they remained emotionally in the tribal world. Roy Burman is critical of the process of modernisation, because at the primitive level of the aspiration, tribes did not feel that they are minority at the regional level, but modernisation along with modern education made them conscious of the political and occupational consciousness and they started feeling themselves minority both at the regional and the national level (ibid)

Hardiman (1987) in his book 'The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India' makes an interesting analysis of the religious-political movement developed among the adivasis (tribal people) in the southern Gujarat in 1920s'. The following of a new goddess Salabai by the Adivasi lead important changes in the lifestyle and the customs of the people in terms of the give-up to alcoholic drinks and meat consumption, thereby follow the path of non violence. But all these changes were connected with the protest against the Parsi Liquor seller and the landlords (ibid).

Hardiman noted the contexts which lead to the emergence of the adivasi movement in southern Gujarat. He mentioned that it was associated with the change in the socio-economic situation of the region when the region undergoes various changes with the penetration of the money lender and the Parsi shopkeepers that are associated with the effort of fixing the landholding and tax agriculture. The Parsi shopkeepers who are associated with the sale of the alcoholic drink that have much socio-cultural importance in the life of the adivasi, became the source exploitation as they begin to associate themselves in the holding of the tribal land and ultimately exploitation of the adivasis (ibid).

One basic argument put forward by the Hardiman regarding the specificity adivasi movement in the southern Gujarat is important. He stated that anti drink campaign of the adivasi movement is not the product of the congress activities as they started much before the arrival of the Gandhian social workers in the scene. Actually, they interpreted the Gandhian principle on the basis of their own religion and when the followers of the Mahatma Gandhi became too contemptuous to the adivasi culture,

they abandoned the Gandhian approach (ibid). Thus, the study is important in understanding the role of the subaltern community in deciding their own future (ibid).

Interesting study of Christoph Von Furer-Haimendorf (1989) is on the pattern and causes of disintegration of tribal traditions. He made the case study of the two tribes namely the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh and the Gonds of Andhra Pradesh to find out the cause of failure of the welfare programmes. He stated that both the tribes are at apparently opposite ends of the spectrum: the Apatanis have able to achieve development and integration without losing their identities because of the protective measures from the government of India, but Gonds are threatened to losses their identity in the process of development (ibid).

The studies on the change brought to the tribal society are also an important domain in the literatures on tribes. The study of Sharma (1978) emphasised the need of participation of the tribes in the process of industrialisation and the mineral exploration, but he cautioned that the participation needs to be understood as a dynamic process. The tribes needed not only to be co-sharer of the wealth created but they need to be active participant of the management and this active participation of the tribes in the planning process can make it realistic. He sees the incompatibility of the administrative system and the local socio-economic situation is the important cause of the conflict in the tribal areas and he feels the need of making the personnel system compatible with local environmental context (ibid).

Baviskar (1995) in her book 'In the Belly of the River: Tribal conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley' analysed environmental movements which are questioning the environmentally destructive development with a special emphasis of the indigenous people who in past lived in harmony with the nature with the sustainable management of the resources. Her book based on the field study among the Bhilala tribes, presents their situation in the face of eventual displacement because of the dam on the Narmada River trying to see various interests groups that are contesting for the land and electricity to be generated, all of which are part of development which has become an agenda of the state. She finds that various streams of ecological consciousness joined together with the cultural traditions of the adivasis to form a powerful, visionary critique of development which despite the

contradictions embedded in the lived reality, promises to inspire environmental action in the future (Ibid).

Vandana Shiva (1988) in her book 'Staying Alive: Women Ecology and Survival in India' is a product of the association of the author with the women's struggle for survival; in India and hence "it is informed both by the suffering and insights of those who struggle to sustain and conserve life, and whose struggles question the meaning of a progress, a science, a development which destroys life and threatens survival" (P XIV). She mentions that there is a destruction of the forest, water and land in the name of development and progress and it ultimately threatens our survival itself. She questions such a model of development which makes us to lose our life support system in the name of development. This violence associated with nature is also associated with the violence against the women as they are dependent on the nature for sustaining themselves, their family and their society. The book sees the perception of the rural Indian women about the destruction of the nature and how they experience it and try for regeneration. This is important because the life of the rural women is still embedded with the nature in the context of India. She describes both science and development as patriarchal because they are class, culture and gender neutral (ibid).

Shiva criticised the western model of development as they are culturally neutral and hence they violate the integrity and destroy the productivity of other (ibid, XVII). In this context, the concept of Indian women about the protection of nature is important as they see economics as production of sustenance and needs satisfaction and hence they oppose the violence over the nature in the name of development. She argues, "A science that does not respect nature's needs and a development that does not respect the people's needs inevitably threaten survival" (ibid, XVII). She again see the positive role of the struggle of the women in India against the destruction of nature and marginalisation of the people thereby giving a human inclusive model of political practice that challenges the dominant concept of power as violence.

Nongbri (1993) in her book 'Development, Ethnicity and Gender' tries to study Development, Ethnicity and Gender as three broad categories with reference to social change. She discussed each of them as a part of the empirical problem in which they occurs. Basically, the book tries to look at the changing contour of the tribal

society by providing the overarching link between Development, Ethnicity and Gender. She argued that the failure of various policies towards tribes is due to failure to comprehend inner dynamics and nuances of the society along with the people's aspiration and goals. The mainstream approach to the tribal society considers it as undifferentiated entity thereby without any form of inequality, even gender relations. She argues that the failure to understand the structure of the tribal society lead to failure of the various policies designed for the region.

Karna (1999) in his article 'Ethnic Identity and Socio-Economic Processes in North-eastern India' examines the reciprocity between ethnic identity and socio-economic processes in the context of the multi-ethnic situation of the North East India. He contends that the phenomenon of identity and its manifestation in the deteriorating inter-group relations are rooted in the nature of the socio-economic development of the area. He asserted that there is a gap between proclaimed policies and adopted development programme in the region. In spite of the recognition at the broader level about the historical specificities of the north-eastern situation, there is absence of suitable strategy to develop the region without disturbing its ecological balance and people's psychology (ibid). Besides these, the growing linkages to the national and global markets with the development schemes lead to the vast change in the local society in terms of the commercialisation of the indigenous designs and skills , change in the pattern of landownership and the property relations . He also emphasised how these development planning are unconnected to the socio-economic reality of the region (ibid).

He also argued that the development projects adopted here failed to harmonise its impact with the aspiration and condition of the existence of the people as most of the development schemes could help only a handful of the people who are aligning themselves with the dominant group from the outside. This creates the condition for the tribal-non tribal conflict because of the relative underdevelopment of the former in comparison to the latter. For him, the growing scarcity of employment in such a situation when the non-tribes are also occupying trade and business through *benami* (unauthorised or illegal) transactions is a matter of tension.

For him, forest constitutes another important dimension of this issue. The economy of the hill people is closely associated with the forest which is also reflected

in their socio-economic setting. Karna see Ecology and People's Right as two major element associated with the forest question. But the imposition of the various regulations through 1855 Memorandum on the traditional forest dwellers, this ethos are seen to surrendered in the matter of revenue interest of the government. It is creating danger not only for the community but also for the ecology. Another issue, as reflected by him is the conversion of the 'jhum' cultivation to the 'terrace' farming which is not at all compatible with the tribal social organisation. They not only lost the ownership of land when the ownership is no more with the village community, it also created the opportunity for the unscrupulous merchants for the destruction of the forests (ibid).

Asif (1999) in his article 'Development Initiative and the Concomitant Issues of Displacement and Improvement in the North-East States' states that the development initiatives in the north east states have to be seen as the product of the macro-economic demands of the region, the processes of the resource exploitation of the region and the state's security concern in the emerging socio-political scenario structured on ethnicity. But the problem lies here as the macro-economic indicators shows the urgent need of the development inputs for the region but existing development paradigm based on industrialisation is bound to failure because it will create adverse consequences on the local population and thus there is a need of a new development paradigm for the region (ibid).

He also asserted that the intrusion of the formal economy to the tribal society, which is earlier based on the notion of the Common Property Resources, informal economy and close association with the forest ecology, created a lot of disadvantage to the tribal population. The large entry of the non-tribal population to the tribal dominated areas is also another issue to the problem (ibid).

For Asif, alienation of tribal from their land is another cause of their impoverishment as being primarily dependent on the agriculture, the loss of land also means loss of the livelihood for the tribal population. Intense Military activity in the region started by the Indian State is also another cause of the alienation of the tribal land. As Militarisation is seen as protective cover for the development activities it created another problem. The basic issue is the failure to respond to the negative

effects of these development activities may lead to disastrous social consequences (ibid).

Mair (1984) stated that the development policies in the less developed countries failed to raise the living standard due to the absence of proper understanding of the situation. It is because of the lack of awareness on the part of the developers about the kind of adjustment that the people required to maintain. She emphasised on the need of taking into account the social structure and the culture of the less developed countries by the people engage in the development projects to have a positive result. She further stated that only when the agent of development are sure about what they want to do and how, then only it can lead to the success of the development projects (ibid).

On the other hand Dube (1990) in his interesting study shows how the role of tradition is often undervalued in the process of development and most often taken as negative as it is understood as barrier to change. This is also related with the assumption that the changes in the social structure and the cultural values are essential pre-condition for the development to take place. He further noticed that the creative potential of the tradition is largely ignored or highlighted with feeble voice. He feels the necessity of assigning proper importance of the tradition in the development process by rethinking the goals and strategies of the development itself (ibid).

On the other hand, Bose (1971) throws some interesting light in to the social life of the tribes. He stated that the tribes are different from the others on the basis of their distinctive social system. Their marriage system is also different and mainly endogamous. He maintained that they are designed as tribes and listed in schedule for special treatment with an aim of bringing them to the mainstream political and economic life (ibid).

Hussain (2008) in his book 'Interrogating Development: State, Displacement and Popular Resistance in North-East India' gives a comprehensive account of the development induced displacement in the 'non-mainstream' region of India i.e north east India in general and Assam in particular. For him, development is a top down approach which failed to meet the popular participation. He stated that the process of land alienation not only displaces people from their land, but also their livelihood,

culture and community life. The insecurity created due to this has led to the marginalisation of the people instead of empowering them (ibid).

He vehemently criticised the post colonial state for the problems of the people. Even in case of the Land acquisition, post colonial Indian state still continuing the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, which was created aiming at the protecting and consolidating the interest of the colonisers. It thus give absolute right to the post colonial Indian State at the cost of the rights of the own people.

In the light of these various conflicts emerged in the North eastern part of India because of the incompatible development projects considering the specificity of the region has thus created popular resistance in the region. Hussain sees these popular resistances which emerged outside the conventional party system as strengthening the democratic consciousness of the people and successfully interrogating the post colonial development paradigm of the Indian State. He sees these new developments in the light of issue of livelihood, environment, rights and dignity of the citizens as New Social movements that can provide a qualitative shift from the existing ethnic movements of the region (Ibid).

Goswami (1984) while studying tribal development with special reference to north east India argues that there need to define clearly the contents of tribal development which will be essentially different from the national one. He maintained that as the tribes are mostly living in the hills and thus minimally integrated with the national economy with the minor exception, so any attempt to extend the national economy to these communities in haste will be counterproductive. He said that this is the one of the main cause of the tribal unrest in the region and even the recent trend of re-tribalisation to assert the tribal identity is the result of such sudden exposure of the tribal areas to the national economics. He argue that the development is a value loaded term as it signifies the lopsided development of one sphere at the expense of another sphere and he advocated that the real development of the tribes in the north eastern region would mean continuous rise in the real per capita income without creating the economic disparities. There is also a need to take care of the future resource availability and the health of the ecology for the development to be real success.

The survey of literature on tribes and tribal development indicates that the distinct socio-economic and cultural situation of the tribes may not be ignored and that development could affect social group differentially, it could lead to displacement and impoverishment of some social groups. Greater knowledge and special planning for problems of tribes is therefore an essential condition for any intervention. Thus, the study of development necessitates careful research into the specific situation of tribes and the changes brought to them.

1.8. Objectives:

Considering the issues of tribes and tribal development mentioned above, following objectives are framed for the dissertation.

1. To conceptualise 'Tribes' and 'Tribal Development' in the context of India and their changing meaning over the period of time.
2. To understand the major approaches to tribal development by the Indian State.
3. To study the conflict between adopted tribal development policies and the socio-cultural reality of tribes of Assam giving due consideration to tribal life and livelihood.
4. To understand the tribal identity in the backdrop of their culture and livelihood patterns and the nature of marginalisation emanates in the process of development that have some relation with the tribal identity.

1.9. Chapterisation:

The Dissertation will be organised in the following manner:

It will consist of three chapters apart from Introduction and Conclusion.

The first chapter tries to conceptualise of tribes in the context of India. The chapter attempts to understand the specificity of the tribal society and their relation with the outside society on the basis of literature from the perspective of administration as well as social scientist.

Second chapter deals with more specific issues of tribal relation with nature and the changing dimension of their relation and the conflict created in the process. By using the Political Ecology framework to understand the relation of the tribes with

nature, it tries to understand the nature of conflict and marginalisation of the tribes in India.

Third chapter discusses the problems of Tribes development in the context of Assam. Besides looking at the general structural processes of marginalisation in the context of Assam, we have also look at the specificity of the tribal situation in Assam by understanding the socio-cultural and political history in the region.

Chapter 1

Conceptualisation of Tribes: Indian Context

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Conceptualisation of Tribes: Indian Context

There is a need to have clear understanding of the meaning of tribes to understand the critical issues associated with the tribal development. This chapter aimed to understand the concept of tribes in the broader context of Indian society, although debate over its conceptualisation in the international level is also taken into consideration. In the initial part, an attempt has been made to understand the general feature of the tribes in India. Then, we try to conceptualise of tribes on the basis of two sources: concept in the legal and administrative context and in the social science literature.

2.1. General Feature of the Tribes in India:

2.1a. Demography and Spatial Distribution of Tribes in India:

The demographic features and its distribution are important to give general understanding the tribes.

The schedule tribal population of India is 8.43crore in 2001 contributing 8.2% of the total population. It had the growth rate of 24.45% during 1991-2001 decade and more than half of the tribal population is concentrated in the state of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Jharkhand and Gujarat.

Schedule tribes population in India reside in diverse ecological and geographical conditions, covering 15% of the total geographical area. They have diversity in social, economic and educational development. While some of them are absorbed into the Hindu peasantry, others are still in the slash and burn cultivation. There are 75 tribes; groups who because of their are known as Particularly Vulnerable Tribes Group (earlier known as Primitive Tribes Groups) (PTG) having characteristics of –a Pre –agricultural level of technology; a stagnant or declining population; extremely low literacy; and a subsistence level of economy (Annual report, 2010-2011).

2.1b. Number of Schedule Tribes:

There is large variation in the number of the schedule tribes listed by government data and different anthropologists. While Roy Burman (1970, 1994) has stated such number of communities as 427, which is widely quoted by various scholars, but the ministry of welfare, government of India (1990, p1) has given number 258. According to Roy Burman, reason behind such difference is that there are many names of tribes in the list which have been shown as synonymous and sub-tribes of the main schedule tribes (Roy Burman, 1994, 1). For example: there are 55 communities in Madhya Pradesh whose names are identified as sub tribes/synonymous with the Gonds. But some of them identified as main scheduled tribes or scheduled caste in the state of Madhya Pradesh itself like the Moghaya, which is sub tribe of Gond and also the main scheduled caste in Madhya Pradesh (ibid). Because of such discrepancy in the list of the schedule tribes, Roy Burman suggested that the numbers should be taken as indicative rather than conclusive (Roy Burman, 1994, p 3).

2.1c. Regional Distribution of Schedule Tribes:

The regional distribution of schedule tribes is indicative of wide geo-political and historical factors that affect their distribution. Roy Burman (1972, p 39; 1994, p5) has classified the schedule tribes into following territorial groups on the basis of their historical, ethnic and socio-cultural attributes- North east India; the Sub- Himalayan region of north and north-west India; Central and east India comprising; South India; Western and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

But this grouping is not entirely satisfactory as there is no strict boundary to divide the regions and thereby it left the scope for overlapping and mis-representation (ibid, 1994).

Two important inferences can be drawn from such classification:

First, there is a continuous belt of the schedule tribal population from Thane District of Maharashtra to Tengnoupal district of Manipur except for narrow gap, if one looks at the taluk level. Secondly, the schedule tribal population are mostly found in the melting point on dominant lingua-political formations such as Assam-West Bengal, West Bengal and Bihar , Bihar and Orissa, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, Maharashtra and Gujarat (ibid, 1994, 4).

2.1d. Racial Composition:

Although, racial difference is not of much importance for the study of the Indian society, but the tribal population can be grouped into some category on the basis of the race. In India, the most accepted classification of race is that of Guha (1935) that lists six main race types and nine sub-types (Vidyarthi ,1977, pp69-70, Roy Burman, 1994, p 7). They are: the Negrito, the Proto-Australoid, the Mongoloid, the Mediterranean, the Western Brachycephals, and the Nordic.

On the basis of above divisions, Guha had divided the tribal population into three major racial types (Roy Burman, 1994) He noted that the Proto Australoid- this group is characterised by the dark skin colour , sunken nose and lower forehead. The Munda, the Oraon, the Ho, the Gond, the Khond etc has predominantly this racial strain. On the other hand the Mongoloid race consists of the tribes of the Himalayan region. He noted that the Negrito consists of the Kadars of Kerala and the Andamanese of Andaman Island come under this stock (ibid, 1994).

The criticism raised against the classification of Guha is of various types. Some scholars have questioned the existence of Negrito strain in India. Besides there are also some missing links in the Guha's classification like Todas in Nilgiri hill are Nordic type, while there are also some Mediterranean types (Roy Burman, 1994, 8).

Although race did not played important role in the identity politics in comparison to the Western world, but the recent cases of 'discrimination' of the people from north east in the various parts of the north India is understood by the media as because of the racial difference. But it cannot be negated that race forms permanent marker of the identity of the tribe as they cannot change it by themselves and thus it is different from the other component that defined the tribal identity.

2.1e. Linguistic Diversity:

Language constitutes an important marker of the tribal identity. Besides, language is also used as resource for the process of fission and fusion among different tribal groups for breaking away or forming into a group. The diversity of the tribes can also be estimated on the basis of language.

On the basis of data from various studies, Roy Burman (1994) remarked that: “...while the Austric languages are spoken as mother tongues exclusively by the scheduled tribal population, languages belonging to other language are shared by scheduled tribes and other populations in varying proportions” (Roy Burman, 1994, 9).

On the basis of Indian census data of 1961, 1971 and 1981 , Khubchandani (1992) observed that : “ Languages of India belong to four different families : Indo-European (Indo –Aryan and Dardic sub-families) having 74 percent of the country’s total population ; Dravidian having 24 percent; Austric constituting 1.2 percent; and Sino-Tibetan(Tibeto-Burman subfamily) having 0.6 percent . The entire population speaking Austric languages is classified as tribes. Tribal languages in other families account for: Tibeto-Burman about eighty percent, Dravidian nearly three percent and the Indo- Aryan little over the one percent” (As quoted in Roy Burman, 1994, 9).

Language forms an important part of the culture of tribes and their identity politics. As it is liable to change, so in most cases small tribal languages which have not developed the major literature can become extinct in the process of assimilation by adopting the language of the economically and culturally strong neighbour (Furer-Haimendorf, 1989). The process may start with bilingualism as a transition stage and the ultimately loss of the language of the minority group. For example, the Telugu is the dominant language which led to the extinction of the many small languages of the Dravidian family in the Godavari belt, like that of the majority of the Koyas. A majority of the koyas speaks Gondi dialect along with the Telegu as a medium of communication, but most of the Koyas have gave up the Gondi dialect altogether. It is interesting to note here is that the displacement of the tribal language lead to the loss of entire oral literature of the tribes and the ultimately the blurring of the tribal

identity and the world view (ibid, 316). But the conditions are different in case of north east India, where there is a revivalism in case of the language of the tribes because they see it as the marker of their identity. We see a lot of cases of the tribal groups to find distinct script different from the dominant group of the region, to mark their identity. The case of the Bodo language adopting the roman script during the course of Bodo movement is only the indication of this, where they protest the dominance of the Assamese language to assert their own identity.

Xaxa (2008) has pointed out another important aspect of the language. He stated that for a tribe to be integrated into the structure of the Hindu society, it is essential for them for acculturation to the language of the regional community. It is because, caste as a form of social organisation are operative only within a linguistic community like Bengali or the Assamese communities (ibid). The language plays an important role in the social organisation of various communities and their relation with other communities.

2.1f. Religion of Tribes:

The issue of religion of the tribes initiate debate among the social scientist as the tribes are identified either as Hindu or as Animists. But, the issue is that the categorisation of the non-Hindus as animists will include many different groups having diverse customs, traditions, and languages together thereby negates the internal differences that may exist among the groups (Xaxa, 2008).

The identification of the religion of the tribes in the census forms an important part of intellectual debate especially in the pre-independence period. The tribes were categorised under the heading of 'tribal religion' up to 1931, but after that they were no more categorised as such but merely as 'others'. This shift can be seen as partly practical and partly political in nature (Furer Haimendorf, 1989) because although there may be some distinguishable features between the religion of the tribes and the Muslims but there are some cults of tribes which are not be easily distinguishable from the Hinduism (ibid). On the other hand, the political objection rose against the listing of the tribes religion separately was that the census report on religion was taken as perpetuator of the communalism (ibid).

An interesting feature of the religion of tribes is the simultaneous existence of the several cultures together. As discovered by Dr Ananda Bhagabati (quoted in Bose, 1971), it was found that in the foothills of the Himalayas, various tribes of the Buddhist religion come down from the mountain with varieties of goods to meet the Hindu tribesman of the valley. A fair used to be held in the foothill which lasts for almost one month. It is interesting to note that before the beginning of the fair, both communities worship a large outcrop of a rock. The tribes from the mountain worship the rock according to the Tibetan rituals by assuming the site as the seat of Buddha, while the tribes from the plains worship the same rock as an embodiment of the Siva (ibid, 65). Thus the presence of diverse beliefs associated with same sacred thing in the same region without any conflict is interesting to note.

The issue of conversion of the tribes from their religion to other religion like Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity is also of immense debate among the social scientist. It is highly contentious tendency to classify the aboriginal tribes as Hindus. Of course there are attempts from the local Hindu communities or from the tribes themselves to discourage from their various customs like cow sacrifice, use of the intoxicating liquor etc, but it should not be understood as direct attempt to convert into Sanskritic Hinduism (Furer Haimendorf, 1989).

2.1f(i). Tribes as Backward Hindu: Religion and the Hindutva Identity Politics:

The conceptualisation of the tribes as Hindus using the expression ‘Backward Hindus’ to designate tribes by G. S. Ghurye in his book “The Aborigines – ‘so called and their Future’” and its later edition under the title “The Scheduled Tribes” have become a line of thinking to represent tribes in India (Xaxa, 2008). Ghurye have classified the tribes of India into three groups on the basis of their level of integration to the Hindu society. First group consists of those who are properly integrated to Hindu society; second group consists of those who are loosely integrated and the third group consists of those that are not more than merely touched by Hinduism (ibid). He said that the last group consist of the people who are imperfectly integrated into the Hindu society and thus they are backward Hindus. The reason behind such an observation by Ghurye was that the there are lot of similarity between Hindu religion

and the animistic religion of the tribes. But the criticism raised against such conceptualisation of Ghurye was that he did not make this observation on the basis of his own field work but on the basis of the observations and the comments made by various census commissioners of the census from 1891 to 1931, where they have shown dissatisfaction over the conceptualisation of the tribes as animists (Ghurye, 1963, 1-22; Xaxa, 2008, 76).

The conceptualisation of the tribes as Hindus has led to various debates in the post colonial period also. But such a conceptualisation of tribe as 'backward Hindu' has opened the ground for the right wing Hindutva groups to make it pattern of thinking about the tribes.

But there are differences in the conceptualisation of the tribes on the basis of their religion in the colonial period and the post independence period. For example, in the colonial period we see that although the tribes are identified on the basis of their distinctive religion, but they are also distinguished by some other criteria such as isolation from the larger society. But the Hindutva group in the post independence period have begun to see the tribes only on the basis of religion (Xaxa, 2008, 76). There is another issue in this line of thinking. The colonial conceptualisation of the tribes as animists means that they are different from the major religions of India. But when the Hindutva groups assert that the Tribes are Hindus, they also means that once they change their religion to religions other than Hindu, they ceases to be tribes and hence deprived of all the provisions that are meant for them according to the provisions of the constitution. The attacks on the tribes who are converted to Christianity in various part of the country by the activists of the Sangh Parivar makes such claim and initiated some new debates (ibid, 76-77).

2.1f(ii). Impact of Christianity on the Tribes in India:

Although Hinduism is the most active force that influences the tribal way of life, the conversion of the tribes to Christianity is also prominent as we can see that 50 percent of the all Nagas and Mizos and the 20 percent of the Mundas and the Oraons are converted into Christianity (ibid, 319). It is observed that the Christian missionaries could work among the tribes in distant places for more than a century because of two reasons: the tribes are more trusting and secondly they provide a more

fertile ground for the developing a truly religious life than the nominally Christian and poverty stricken classes of the countries from which the missionaries come could offer (Bose, 1971). For the missionaries, it is more rewarding to work among the simpler and more responsive tribes of India than working in the home country (ibid).

Besides conversion, the Christian missionaries had major impact on the tribal culture; customs, beliefs and practices and it ultimately lead to shape their identity. Although it is argued that Christian religion has able to bring the benefits of the modern and western civilisation into the society of tribes, it is highly debated. The impact of the Christian missionaries lead to the condition in which the tribes feel more closer to the British than the Indian counterpart because of the western way of life (Bose,1971), which is more close to the values of Christianity. But if we look positive character to this change, there is no doubt that changes brought about through the means of education could improve the standard of living of tribes and the reliance on the modern medicine (ibid). The role of the Christian missionaries in imparting western education in the tribal belt of the north east India is well pronounced. The high literacy in the tribal belt of the north east India is due to the work of the Christian missionaries. They also helped the tribal languages to find the medium of writing especially through the roman script and hence they could help to stop displacement of the some of the major language in the face of the dominant language of the area. But, there are criticisms rose against the work of the Christian missionaries as their work had been major force of the alienating the tribes of their own culture and identity. It is observed that the “...missionary influence has eroded much of the tribal cultural heritage, which was inseparably linked with their traditional mythology, beliefs, and rituals, and wilted when they were abandoned” (Furer-Haimendorf, 319). The influence of the Christian missionaries is seen among the tribes and when most of the western missionaries have left, their work is now continued by the Indian Christians, who are also being criticised for having the same negative attitude towards the customs of tribes as the earlier counterparts (ibid). But it is to be mentioned that the impact of the Christian missionaries on the identity of tribes cannot be neglected as there was a tendency towards westernisation among tribes, which was changed to some extent in the post independence period when there is allegiance to one’s own culture is being encouraged for maintaining distinct tribal identity (Bose, 1971).

An interesting conclusion can be drawn from the study of the religion of the tribes. While discussing about the religion of the tribes, we not only discuss about the various indigenous faiths and practices but also the multidimensional changes brought about in their practices with the contact with the various other religious communities. It may be the shift to Hinduism or shift to the western religion like Christianity. In the present day context, there is a trend to unify the tribes of the Christian or non Christian faith to assert the identity of tribes for political demands (Bose, 1971).

2.1g. Diversity of Occupation:

There is a great diversity of the tribal occupations. The tribal occupation is generally accepted as a marker of their socio-economic conditions. Although, settled cultivation is most common form of occupation among the tribes, shifting cultivation is most commonly discussed considering its environmental as well as socio-cultural implications for the tribes.

Roy Burman (1994) has classified the occupations of tribes into seven types: forestry and gathering; shifting cultivation; settled agriculture; agricultural labour; animal husbandry; household industry and miscellaneous occupations.

The forestry and the food gathering occupation is limited to only few tribes like Sentinelese, the Shompen and the Jarawa of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The number of communities dependent only on forestry and the gathering is declining due to the number of the interventions of the state and the preference of the tribes to perform some other economic activities also along with forestry and gathering (ibid). Again there are cases of the communities like the Birhor and Malapandaram, who are symbiotically associated with the peasant communities along with their occupation of forestry and gathering and as such they besides exchanging the commodities, can also earn cash by the sale of the products in the market (ibid).

Shifting cultivation is one of the important form of occupation especially among the scheduled tribes of the of the Arunachal , Nagaland , Manipur , Tripura, part of Assam, Bihar , Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra,

Karnataka and Kerala (ibid). It need to be mentioned that Shifting cultivation is dissuaded by the state as it is seen as causing the environmental destruction by the means of the soil erosion and deforestation as well as having less productivity. But one needs to mention that it is the only viable means of occupation in the topography of the hill areas considering ecology of the hills and the long experience of the tribes involving in shifting cultivation for ages.

On the other hand, settled cultivation consist of the rain fed upland cultivation, dry terrace cultivation, terrace cultivation with socially regulated water harvesting system and the wet rice cultivation in the narrow valley. It is primary source of occupation for the majority of the tribes of the country (ibid).

A considerable population of the scheduled tribes engaged as agricultural labourer to earn their livelihood in the some parts of the country like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, West Bengal (ibid). It is be noted that the number of the agricultural labourers have been increasing among the scheduled tribes because of their alienation from their land or the other means of livelihood.

The Tribes associated with household industry generally attached themselves to the dominant neighbours as satellite communities and thus they are involved in the manufacturing mainly for their clients. The household industry as a main source occupation is found among the few small tribal communities like the Mahalis of the West Bengal, Turis of Bihar and the Agarias of Madhya Pradesh (ibid).

The Gujars of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh, Bhotiyas of Uttar Pradesh, Rabaris of Rajathan, parts of Gujarat, Kurubas of parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka are the various tribes who are associated with the livestock rearing as the main source of livelihood along with the pastoral nomadism (ibid).

Although the tribes are mostly associated with these occupations mainly on the subsistence basis, there are few tribes who have been drawn into few modern industries. While the Santal, Oraon, Munda, Savar etc worked as plantation worker in the Assam and the North Bengal; tribes like Ho are associated with the mining

industry. On the other hand, Bhil and Gonds are now drawn to work as industrial worker in the Maharashtra and Gujarat (Roy Burman, 1972, 49-50; 1994, 11).

Pathy (1982) has criticised the classification of the economic system of the tribes of India on the basis of their occupations and ecological positions as such classifications reflect the nominalistic and the mechanistic concept of social reality (Roy Burman, 1994, 12).

Vidyarthi and Rai (1977, 72) have classified the tribes on the basis of predominant occupations. They have classified the tribes on the basis of an evolutionary schema by considering occupation-cultural type. But there is essential difference between their classification and that of the Roy Burman. For example, Roy Burman do not see the predominant presence of the occupations as the basis of the classification of the communities in the evolutionary scheme, when he classified the tribal occupation as forestry and gathering; shifting cultivation; settled agriculture; agricultural labour; animal husbandry; household industry and miscellaneous occupations. But Vidyarthi and Rai see the predominant presence of the occupation for their classification (Roy Burman, 1994, 11-12).

Thus, diversity of occupation is predominant character in the tribes with high dependence on the primitive occupations. The nature of occupations also shows that the tribes are highly dependent on nature especially land and forest.

2.2. Meaning of Tribes:

2.2a. Official View on Tribes:

The concept of 'tribes' connotes a changing meaning over the period of time depending on the changing socio-political situation and academic engagement. In the Indian context, the meaning of tribes provided by the constitution has importance due to its socio-political implication for tribes as well as whole society. The scheduling of a particular community as tribe implies some protective as well as empowerment measure for them. As a result, status of scheduled tribe is now seen as political resource.

Article 366 (25) of the Indian constitution refers to schedule tribes as those communities, who are scheduled in accordance with the article 342 of the constitution. According to the article 342 of the constitution, only those communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending act of parliament will be considered to be scheduled tribes.

The essential characteristics, first listed by Lokur committee for a community to be identified as scheduled tribe are said to be the indication of the primitive traits of the tribes because the tribes has a distinctive culture characterised by their geographical isolation and the shyness to contact with the community at large (Annual Report, 2010-11). But there is a need to question such conceptualisations, because the tribes were located in the geographically inaccessible regions; and thus they were relatively cut off from the mainstream society. But it cannot be the reason to treat them as backward.

The first Backward Classes Commission (Kalelkar Commission) appointed by the president of India have clearly explained the specificity of the situation of tribes. The commission in the questionnaire itself clarified about the exclusive existence of the scheduled tribes when it said that the scheduled tribes “lead a separate exclusive existence and are not fully assimilated in the main body of the people. Scheduled tribes may belong to any religion. They are listed as scheduled tribes because of the kind of life lead by them” (p1, as quoted in Roy Burman, 1994, 58). It further noted, “the way of living of the scheduled tribes was peculiar” (p, 53).

Similar pattern of observation can be seen in the classification of the tribes by the Tribal Welfare Committee met on the occasion of the Indian Conference of Social Work at Calcutta in 1951. It classified the tribes into four groups on the basis of the assumption that the tribes generally reside in the inaccessible habitat and hence they are different from the rest of the Indian population. The basic classification of the tribes was: the first group consist of the tribes who are still residing in the original forest habitat and having old pattern of life; second group consist of the semi tribes who have taken to agriculture or allied occupation by more or less settling down in the rural areas. Third group consist of those accultured groups who have migrated to the urban or semi urban areas and engaged in the industrial occupations; while the

fourth group have those tribes who are totally assimilated into the Indian population. There are many criticism raised against this classification as there is no uniform criteria in this classification which we can see with the shift from one set of criteria to another which are not mutually exclusive. “While the first two categories have been identified mainly based on the nature of habitat and occupation, without bringing in issue of acculturation, the third category has been designated primarily with reference to acculturation. The last category is seen as the teleological” (Roy Burman, 1994). There are many examples which do not support this classification, like the many of the forest dwelling communities like the Brahmans or the Rajputs of the Uttarakhand or in Chhattisgarh or in Koraput are not tribes (ibid). Again, we have the history of many forest dwellers who practiced settled agriculture for generation like the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh (ibid).

2.2b. Origin of the Concept of ‘Tribes’: Colonial Conceptualisation:

Although, the term ‘tribes’ as a concept got broad operational meaning during the colonial period, but there are attempts to trace the legacy of the concept to pre-colonial period.

For Bara (2001), colonial use of the term ‘tribes’ was political in nature which had its origin in layman understanding as synonymous with primitiveness, savagery and wildness (Bara, 2001, p 121). He stated that the early British campaigner, administrator and Christian missionaries use term tribes for those people that depicts social behaviour by living in mountain and forests, away from the population of the plain and thus maintaining their cultural features even if encroaches by outsiders. As such, they were similar to the indigenous people they encountered in Africa, America and Australia, and so British use the term ‘tribes’ (ibid, 121).

Bara further pointed out that pre-colonial depiction of the tribes as *dasyus*, *daityas*, *rakshakas* and *nishadas* have some relation with the colonial concept of tribes. He argued that the concept of tribes evolved during the colonial rule, as a new construction that recycled from the pre-colonial material on the tribes (ibid, 126).

But such a conceptualisation of tribes depicts a cultural relativism as location of a community in a relatively geographically inaccessible region cannot be the reason

for equating them with sub-human or near animal feature. But, without going deep into the debate, we can feel the strong ethnocentrism in such conceptualisation.

Ray (1972) said that something in our society which can be taken as analogous to tribes in down the history can be '*Jana*', meaning 'communities of people' (ibid, 8-9). In this context, he stated that the '*jana*' is different because it remained outside the '*jati*' society. He said; " A careful analysis of the long list of *Janas* in epics, Buddhist, Puranic , and secular literature of early and medieval times and the context in which they are mentioned , makes it very clear that hardly any distinction was made, until very late in history, between what we know today as 'tribes' and such communities of people who were known as Gandharas and kambojas , Kasis and kosalas , Angas and Magadhas, Kurus and Panchalas for instance....In fact, in the literary sources I have referred to, the communities of people whom today we refer to as 'tribes' and those that we know in history as belonging to more advanced stages of socio-economic and cultural growth, there is hardly any evidence to show that in the collective mind of the India's communities of people there was any consciousness of a difference between two sets of *janas* except in the matter of *jati* , that is, in the matter of socio-religious and economic organisation alone. These *janas* whom we have been taught to call 'tribes', were indeed different from the other communities of people only in the sense that they continued to remain, for reasons which I shall soon come to, outside the control of the *jati* system of social organisation" (ibid, 9-10).

Thus, apart from the root word 'jan' meaning 'to be born', Ray stated that '*jana* 'is different from '*jati*' and more closer to tribes in social organisation (ibid). Therefore, Ray's conceptualisation of the tribes is not with the beasts like features as stated by Bara but differences in the social organisation.

On the other hand, some scholars have argued that the concept 'tribes' is a colonial construction. Even Xaxa (2008) argued that British through the process of classification and enumeration, has helped in the construction as well as solidification of the concept (Xaxa, 2008, 1). Xaxa stated that colonial administrators used the term for both classificatory purpose and administrative convenience to describe the people who were heterogeneous in physical and linguistic traits, demographic size, ecological conditions of living, regions inhabited, stages of social formation, and levels of acculturation and development (ibid, 2).

2.2c. Various Frameworks for Understanding 'Tribes' in Indian Context:

Apart from the two broad approaches to understand the concept of tribe i.e Politico-administrative and the Social Science approach, there are many variations in the social science approach itself. In the Indian context, we see attempts to understand the tribes with respect to other social categories like caste, peasant and ethnic groups. Besides, there are attempts to understand tribes on the backdrop of International debate on Indigenous people.

2.2c (i). Tribes as a Stage of Social Evolution:

There are attempts to situate tribes in a particular stage of social evolution.

For Maurice Godelier, the social formation of tribes can be identified in two ways: as history of evolution of societies and as a type of society which is organised as a multi functional grouping on the basis of kinship (As quoted in B. K Roy Burman, 1994, p 36). Here, he mentions about the positive and negative characteristics to designate primitive state. The negative traits means absence of those positive traits found in western societies or present in less amount (like non-literate, uncivilised, arrested in development, non industrialised, non urban, lacking economic specialisation). The primitive societies are thus seen as inferior. For him, positive traits include the social relations based primarily on kinship along with all embracing religion, thus bringing co-operation for common goal (ibid, 36).

In this context, we can refer to the work of Beteille (1986), when he said that in the situation of India and the Islamic world, where tribes and civilisations coexist, tribes are seen as remaining outside state and civilisation. He mentioned that such an existence can be either because of choice or necessity, rather than a particular stage of evolution of society from more simple to complex. He said that they are tribes because they stood more or less outside Hindu civilisation and they are large assortment of communities with differing size, mode of livelihood and social organisations (Beteille, 1986, also quoted in Xaxa, 2008).

Thus, we see that tribes are regarded as primitive or remaining outside the civilisation thereby inferring as if they can be brought to civilisation; which is regarded as more advanced stage of civilisation. This dichotomy between primitive

and civilised has modernisation biases whereby they regard that society follows a unilinear evolutionary history from simple to complex society. Although, such a conceptualisation based on western concept – of primitive and civilised, we can understand that the tribes have distinctive social organisation which is clearly separate from rest of society.

In the similar way, Elwin (1944) divided tribes into four categories. They are: the purest of the pure tribal groups, those in contact with the plains and therefore undergoing changes but still retaining the tribal mode of living; those constituting the lower rung of the Hindu society; and those adopting the Hindu fold completely and living in a modern style (As quoted in Xaxa, 2008, 16). In this categorisation, Elwin saw first two blocks as real primitive, as they are living in hills. The most primitive characteristics of the first group include living in largely communal life, shifting cultivation, avoidance of stranger etc. The second category has village life more individualistic, along with more outward life besides discontinuation of economic sharing. The more numerous third category has lost hold on tribal culture, religion and social organisation under the influence of the cultural contact. For Elwin, the last category is a triumph of cultural contact (Ghurye, 1963).

Thus, the understanding of Elwin means that tribes are not only heading in the ladder of evolution with the other groups, but there is sign of movement among the tribes itself whereby some group are taken as more advanced than the other tribes. But, these evolutionary perspective needs to keep away the cultural biases, as taking a form of social life as more advanced than the other only means the cultural politics in knowledge creation and the hegemony of the western powerful groups in creating knowledge.

2.2c(ii). Understanding Tribes by the Means of Classification:

There are many classifications of tribes on the basis of their stages of absorption into the Hindu society. They are not only classificatory study but they also depict the nature and process of absorption of tribes into the Hindu society. Thus these classifications also help to understand the tribes in the context of Indian society.

B. K. Roy Burman (1972) has classified the tribes into four types on the basis of their orientation towards Hindu social order. They are – those who are incorporated in the Hindu social order; those positively oriented towards Hindu social order; those who are negatively oriented toward the Hindu social order, and those who are indifferent towards the Hindu social order (Roy Burman, 1972, 42-43).

He said that the tribes like Bhumij, Bhil etc have accepted the caste structure and can be considered incorporated in the Hindu social order. On the second category, he referred to the tribes like Santal, Oraon, Munda, Gond etc who are positively oriented towards the Hindu social order as they have adopted the symbols, ethos and the world view of the Hindu neighbours; although bulk of them have not been included in the caste frame. Roy Burman categorised the tribal communities like Mizos and Nagas as negatively oriented towards the Hindu social order which reject the caste as a frame for social organisation. The tribal communities of NEFA are considered as indifferent to the Hindu social order as they are not aware of the tenets of Hinduism and the system, their system of purity and pollution is not similar to that of Hindus (ibid, 43).

On the other hand, Sinha (1962) stated that the tribes are absorbed into Hindu society through the method of state formation. For him, formation of principalities is associated with the process of acculturation, Hinduization and social stratification in the village society. The definite socio-political framework provided by state formation is seen to be associated with transformation of tribes system into regional caste system (ibid).

For him, the process of state formation along with the establishment of the dynasties of tribes in many parts of the peninsular India during ancient and medieval period is associated with the absorption of tribes into the Hindu caste system.

Thus, caste forms an important framework for the study of the tribes and their classification. It seems that caste has so much influence on the Indian society that study of any social category necessitates to see its influence.

There are also some classifications of the tribes on the basis of the nature and amount of acculturation. Vidyarthi and Rai (1977) have classified tribes into five groups. The first group consist of the distinct tribes in highly isolated region like

forest, hunting tribes and hill cultivators. Second groups consist of the rural tribes who are dependent on the agriculture and other similar occupations and living in rural areas like agricultural tribes. On the other hand, the third group consist of semi-accultured tribes like the tribes living in the mixed villages. Accultured tribes are who have accepted modern occupations like industrial labours constitute the fourth category. The last group consist of totally assimilated tribes who have acquired a place in the Hindu caste ladder like Bhumij, Majhis etc (ibid, 72). But there is a lack of logical consistency in this classification. Xaxa (2008) observed that in the classification of Vidyarthi and Rai, there are some categories which are classified based on ecological consideration and others on the basis level of acculturation (Xaxa, 2008). Besides, there is also an ideological bias seen in his classification (Roy Burman, 1994).

Dube (1977) also maintained fivefold classification of tribes based on the mixed criteria of acculturation, economics, social organisation and status in contact situation. His main types are: aboriginals living in seclusion as first group. Second group consist of the tribes who have developed their association with neighbouring village folks which have modified their economy but they still maintain distinctive social organisation. The third category consists of those tribes which retain their organisation but live in a common village mixed with other castes, sects and religious groups. The fourth category consists of those tribes who are faced to accept the degraded status of untouchables. Fifth category has those tribes who have high social status, economic status and political influence in spite of being tribes (ibid, p 35).

Therefore, it can be inferred from the classification of tribes made by Vidyarthi and Rai (1977) and Dube (1977) that, tribes are not homogenous category, but the internal diversity can be seen in the tribal society considering the different aspects like process of acculturation, economic situation, social organisation etc.

2.2c (iii).Caste, Jati and Tribes:

Indian society is highly influenced by caste system. Outside Hindu fold, the caste influence is indirect or less; but it cannot be denied. Thus, every social

formation in India is studied with respect to caste in some way or other considering the influence of the caste system in the social formation in India.

It is not like that the caste system itself is static. Even caste is now understood in terms of the nomenclature of *jati*. But, the study of the tribes in the framework of caste or *jati* has importance. Although, there are some vestiges of evolutionary framework in such studies, but both are not same. We can see sharp contrast between the conventional colonial view which see tribes and caste as dichotomous categories; and studies made by scholars such as L. P. Vidyarthi, D. N. Majumdar, N. K. Bose, Surajit Sinha and D. D. Kosambi who points to the contrary (Nongbri, 2003, 28).

Xaxa (2008) said that study of communities in caste/ tribes perspective is a recent phenomenon and not found in the British anthropological writings (ibid, 14). For him, there is difficulty among the ethnographers to differentiate the two terms caste and tribe in the initial period and sometimes both are used in cognate manner as for example the Risley use of phrase 'Tribes and castes in India' (ibid, 14).

Xaxa also mentioned that 'caste' and 'tribes' are seen to represent two different forms of social organisation in post independence period. In this context, he differentiates 'castes' and 'tribes' in terms of social organisation. He said;

"It has generally been assumed that the two represent two different forms of social organisations. Caste has been treated as a system regulated by the hereditary division of labour, hierarchy, the principles of purity and pollution, and civil and religious disabilities. On the other hand, tribes have been characterised by the absence of features attributed to the caste system. The two types of social organisations are also seen as being governed by different sets of principles. It is said that kinship bond governed tribal societies. Hence, all individuals are considered to be equal. Lineage and clan tend to be the chief units of ownership as well as production and consumption. In contrast, inequality, dependency and subordination are seen as integral feature of the caste society. It is also said that tribes do not differentiate between the utilitarian and the non-utilitarian function of religion as sharply as caste groups do. Caste groups tend to maintain different forms, practices, and behaviour patterns for each of these two functions of religion. Tribes and castes are also seen to

be different in respect to the psychological disposition of their members. Tribes are said to take a direct, unalloyed satisfaction in the pleasures of the senses, whether in food, drink, sex, dance, or song. As against this, people in caste based societies are seen as having ambivalent attitudes towards such pleasures” (Xaxa, 2008, 15).

The differences which are formulated between caste and tribes are not rigid, and it is argued by many that there is inherent tendency among tribes to acquire some of the features of castes, albeit through many processes. Although, opposite way can also be possible but such studies are very less. There are many theoretical frameworks to see the transformation of tribes into caste. These include- D.D. Kosambi and N.K. Bose’s Brahminic- cum- technological model, Surajit Sinha’s Rajput or kshatriya model, and Sanskritisation model of Srinivas.

For Kosambi (1965), the tribes are integrated to Hindu society mainly through the method of adoption of technology of Hindu society. In this context, he saw the Brahmins as the main cultural agent who introduced the use of plough, knowledge of seeds, crops, agricultural calendar, markets and trade along with cultural traits and values of the caste society (Kosambi, 1965, 172, also quoted in Nongbri2003: 29).

Similarly, people like Bose (1945) have referred to tribes being absorbed into Hindu society. He said that, specialisation of occupation of Hindu mode of production along with checking competition also helps in developing reciprocal relations and this attracted the tribes into the Hindu mode of production. But such a pattern of absorption to Hindu fold is questioned by many and the debate among anthropologists is ranges between whether tribes are assimilated or absorbed into Hindu fold (Xaxa, 2008). Xaxa mentioned that some of the tribes are hardly differentiable from the neighbouring Hindu peasantry like the Bhils, the Bhumijis, the Majhis, the Khasa and the Raj- Gonds (ibid, 2008, 16).

Thus, although the influence of caste society on the tribes and its social organisation cannot be denied, there is need to have a critical look to see the nature of influence. The influence of caste society can be better understood by looking at the process of absorption of the tribes into Hindu fold, albeit through many processes.

2.2c(iv) Sanskritisation of the Tribes:

The transformation of the tribes into caste is highly debatable and in this context, the issue of Sanskritisation comes. For Srinivas (1972) “Sanskritisation is the process by which a ‘low’ Hindu caste, or tribes or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, ‘twice-born’ caste. Generally, such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community..... Sanskritisation is usually accompanied by, and often results in, upward mobility for the caste in question; but mobility may also occur without Sanskritisation and vice-versa. However, mobility associated with Sanskritisation results only in positional change in the system and does not lead to any structural change” (ibid, 6). Again he mentioned,

“... Sanskritisation is not confined to Hindu castes but also occurs among tribal and the semi-tribal groups such as the Bhils of the western India, the Gonds and the Oraons of the central India and the Pahadis of the Himalayas. This usually results in the tribes undergoing Sanskritisation claiming to be caste, and therefore, Hindu. In the traditional system, the only way to become a Hindu was to belong to a caste, and the unit of mobility was usually a group, not an individual or a family (ibid, 6-7).

Thus, we can see that, in case of tribes, the process of Sanskritisation also connotes Hinduization where for becoming caste status, it needed to become Hindu first. There are many criticisms regarding the use of the concept ‘Sanskritisation’ rather than ‘Hinduization’ in this context.

Scholars like Xaxa (2008) argued that ‘tribes’ are categorised so because they are outside both Hindu society as well as caste society. In this context, he sees it problematic to say that tribes are Sanskritised without being first Hinduised. Again, there is a question about the position acquired by tribes in the process or do they able to move up in the caste hierarchy (Hardiman, 1987, 158-59; also quoted in Xaxa, 2008, 18).

Xaxa (2008) again observed that, the tribes remain outside the hierarchical structure of Hindu society even after undergoing Hinduization. It is not clear about the position and the caste name that the tribes acquired after the Sanskritisation. He also

saw a problem regarding the reference group. Because, in the literature on Sanskritisation, it is not clear as which caste group the tribes emulate. Besides, it is seen that the claiming the upper status in the caste hierarchy is not major concern for the tribes in India , thereby making it more appropriate to the use of the term ‘Hinduization’ rather than ‘Sanskritisation’ (ibid 18-19).

Hardiman (1987) also criticised the Sanskritisation model of the Srinivas when he saw the embracing of the high caste principles such as vegetarianism as a way for entry into the caste society. He gives the example of the southern Gujarat where such movements are specially aimed against the Parsis. He argues that Adivasi use to make creative contribution to the values that they appropriated (ibid).

Although, there may be debate regarding the appropriateness of the concept of Sanskritisation in understanding social change among tribes , but it can be argued that there is a clear tendency among the tribes to come to the Hindu fold by emulating the life style and the values and thus coming closer to the caste groups.

Roy Burman (1977) noted that ‘Sanskritisation’ in the sense in which Srinivas has described is a phenomenon of the colonial period. He asserted that, prior to colonial period, rulers and their close circles used to adopt the high caste norms with an aim of strengthening alliances among elites horizontally (ibid). But, he (1994) further asserted that, at the same time there is also procedure of incorporating the conquered people to the low status of the caste system. For him, Sankritisation as a movement for vertical mobility became possible and inevitable because of two reasons- “first, after the codification of the Hindu Laws based on the norms laid down by the Brahman Pandits and supported by scriptural sources, it had the positive sanction of law. Second, spread of secular values on the one hand and the ethos of the national liberation struggle on the other eroded the resistance of the ‘higher’ castes against the ‘presumptuousness’ of the lower castes to try to live like them” (Roy Burman, 1994, 66).

Thus, we can see that there are attempts from the tribes to emulate the lifestyles of the people of the Hindu caste system. But, question arises whether the emulation of the values has the same aim as happens in the caste system to move up in the caste hierarchy. Some scholars (Xaxa, 2008, 19) asserted that it is not the main concern for the tribes to climb in the caste hierarchy. Tribal groups consideration of

some caste as superior was because they are also jagirdars , thicadars, lambadars etc, but not because of their high social status (ibid, 19).

Thus, Sanskritisation as an instrument of mobilisation in the tribes is different in the aim and nature, as it happens in the caste system for the positional change in the caste hierarchy.

2.2c(v). Tribes and Peasant:

Along with caste, peasant also forms frame of reference for studying tribes in India.

Xaxa (2008) maintained that tribes can be defined by the features of a segmentary system, thus tribes are taken as definite structural type which are being small in scale and are different from more complex social system where peasantry and gentry co-exist. Thus, he regarded tribes as small self contained unit in contrast to peasant and peasant society which are part of whole culture rather than whole society itself (ibid, 22). He also maintained that tribes are no more static, but a process of peasantisation is seen along with cultural contact with the non-tribes world along with the development strategy of the Indian state especially in the post independence period. He argued that the tribes became part of peasant societies without losing the attributes of tribes as society and thus dichotomy posed between tribes and peasant is false (ibid, 23-24).

Thus we see that although tribes and peasant have different characteristics but a process whereby tribes is fast acquiring the position of the peasant along with their tribal character. So they cannot be isolated into well separated compartments, as the features of the peasant can be present in the tribal society as well, although they may still continue to exist in the broader social organisation of the tribes.

2.2c(vi). Ethnicity, Nation and Tribes:

Although, there exist some interrelations, but ethnic group, nation and tribes are not same.

Ethnic group is any hereditary group with shared values, life style, exclusive symbol of identity and consciousness. Tribes are different from ethnic groups because, generally a tribal community has a historical association in respect to some

productive resources in oppose to ethnic group which may or may not have such prerogative. Similarly, tribal societies are relatively closed but the ethnic groups may not be close to that extent. (Roy Burman, 1994, 67)

The issue of identity takes the central place in discussing the ethnicity and tribes. For Roy Burman, tribal identity beyond the primitive status is based on the moral solidarity which is achieved from the kinship ties along with the perception of the common habitat. (ibid, 69)

The discussion of the tribes in the framework of the ethnicity and the nation has the importance considering the specificity of the tribes. As tribes are seen as isolated category away from the mainstream society, their ethnic identity is of interest to the social scientist for the greater goal of the nation formation. But it is essential to point out that specificity of the tribal existence and the colonial and post colonial historical legacy on the basis of different legal provisions and policies helped to shape the ethnic identity of the tribes to a considerable degree.

2.2d. Recent Debate of Idea of Indigenous People: ILO Convention and India:

The study of 'tribes' in the context of India bears the influence of the International debate on the idea of Indigenous people and the works and the policies formulated for preservation of the rights and privileges of the indigenous people.

The idea of indigenous people was used for the first time in 1957 in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention 107 and it got wide publicity after declaring 1993 as the International Year of the Indigenous People. (Xaxa, 2008) Again, ILO adopted another convention 169 in 1989, and this was different from the earlier convention.

The convention 107 of 1957, while making distinction between tribes and the semi-tribes population from the indigenous tribal population maintained that tribal and the semi tribal population are at less advanced stage of development and their own customs and traditions regulate their status, may be wholly or partially. On the other hand, indigenous tribal population were those categories of tribal and semi-tribal population that try to see their descent from the population who were in the country or the geographical region of the country at the time of conquest or colonization. Besides, they live with more conformity with the social, economic and the cultural

institutions of the time of colonisation. (Daes, 1996; ILO, 1989; Roy Burman, undated; as referred in Xaxa , 2008, 30)

Along with the growing importance of the study of the indigenous population, a working group on the indigenous population was constituted in 1982, by the Economic and Social Council of UN to review the developments related to the promotion of human rights and the fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples and also to put emphasis regarding the rights of indigenous people. (Roy Burman, 1994, 132) This working group has prepared a draft of 'Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples', although it did not define the indigenous population. (Ibid, 133)

"Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from the other sectors of the societies now prevailing in these territories or parts of them. They form at present a non-dominant sector of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems." (International Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, 1987, 8; as quoted by Roy Burman, 1994, 133)

Nongbri (2003) see the concept 'indigenous' as a dynamic concept which help the people to overcome their subordinate position. She stated: "... the concept of indigenous (peoples) serves both as a heuristic device to capture the existential reality of the people so defined and an instrument for action to correct the injustice history has heaped upon them. As a political tool, the concept is a powerful device that challenges the long periods of subjugation to which people defined as indigenous has been condemned by the hierarchical power structure that intruded into their life. Social scientists, however, seem to have failed to appreciate the transformatory potential of the concept and its explicit concern to correct the asymmetrical and the exploitative relations between indigenous and the dominant populations."(ibid, 2003, 44-45)

Thus, Nongbri see the concept of 'indigenous' people as a device for the political liberation, to bring equality and symmetry in the power structure.

2.2d(i). Adivasi Identity of Tribe and Indigenous People:

The idea of indigenous people has found its equivalent in the form of the 'adivasi' in India; without much questioning, although it has opened up the scope for many criticisms. The 'adivasi' connotation for the tribes in India has much impact on their identity in distinguishing them from the dominant community. In this context, Xaxa (2008) remarked, "They hardly felt any unease in using the native equivalent of this term, namely adivasi....social workers, administrators, politicians, and the scholars took the term, along with all its attendant prejudices to the masses. That is how the notion of adivasi identity centred the consciousness of tribal people. The identity that was forced upon them from the outside precisely to mark their differences from the dominant community has now been internalised by the tribal people themselves. Not only has it become an important mark of social differentiation and identity assertion, it is also an important tool for the articulation of the demand for empowerment." (Xaxa, 2008, 28)

Thus, 'adivasi' identity which is used as equivalent to the term 'indigenous' has shaped the identity of the tribes in the context of India. But the use of such term has also been criticised by various scholars. Even Ghurye preferred to use the term 'so-called aborigines'.

Xaxa (2008) said that the determination of the indigenous population in the Indian context is problematic considering the specificity of the indigenous population and the experiences. The identification of a group with a particular territory in the course of their continuous movement over the period of time is highly contested issue over the question of the indigenous population in the context of India. He further stated that this question of the territoriality has a close relation with the homeland movement taking place in India. But such assertions need to be seen in the context of feeling of being threatened, both politically and economically, on the eve of movement of the people from the outside. Here, he see it as paradoxical because, although political rights and privileges over territory are recognised for some communities the economic process of growth and development dispossess them of their control over the resources (land, forest, water and minerals) in their own territory. (ibid, 38) He suggested that issue of the tribes need to be seen both empirically as well as conceptually. (ibid, 38)

Xaxa also see a political overtone in the formation of the adivasi consciousness. Thus, he said that we have to go beyond the concept of the original inhabitant of India while discussing about the adivasi identity in the context of tribes in India, as it is more associated with the sense of powerlessness that the tribes feel over the resources (land, forest, river and minerals) in the territory of their living. He said that this process of marginalisation and powerlessness is the fact behind their assertion of adivasi identity. (ibid)

Thus, the adivasi identity of the tribes goes beyond the mere the identity of indigenous people as put forward by the debates on the international level. Although, the debate of the indigenous people and tribes as indigenous people continue; but it cannot be denied that the preservation of the human rights and the freedom in essential for tribes as like the indigenous people.

2.2d(ii). Indigenous Population and Tribes as Original Inhabitant:

There are conflicting viewpoints regarding the tribes as the original inhabitants of India. It is because of the complexity of the migration that has been taking place in India for long time, besides the unavailability of the proper data. The attempts to associate the identity of a community with a particular area in the recent years have accentuated the problem.

Xaxa (2008, 36) has argued that, there is a need to make a distinction about the context in which the indigenous or original inhabitant of a particular region is seen. He stated that there is need to have a distinction between the assertion of indigenous status at all India level or specific to a particular region considering the historical continuity of the movement of people across the country, thereby negating the indigenous status to a particular group to a particular territory, which may be accepted as indigenous at all India level. In this context, he remarked, “The Oraons, the Mundas, and many other tribes living in Jharkhand, for example, may have a legitimate claim to be called indigenous people in respect of their settlement in the country called India prior to the arrival of the Aryans, or even in respect of their settlement of Jharkhand; but it is not certain if they can claim to be indigenous in Assam and Bengal, areas in to which they move in the course of the last century or so. Indeed, their claim to being indigenous is strongly contested in these places.” (ibid, 39)

Even, Beteille (1995), questions the designating the tribes alone as indigenous people in India. He remarked: 'it would be absurd to designate as indigenous only the tribal population.' (Beteille, 1995) While discussing the tribes in the frame of reference of caste, he stated that the distinction between caste and tribes is blurred. Further, he stated that the continuous movement of the people throughout the history make it difficult to categorise a particular group as indigenous. But, in another article, Beteille (1986) said tribes as Indigenous people as they escaped the process of colonization and subjugation.

Pathy (1992) see the tribes and the indigenous as the analogous categories on the substantive plane and the process of colonization of the tribes areas from the dominant community from the neighbouring area as 'internal colonisation'. He said that the tribes and the indigenous can be equated and is against any conceptual debate on this aspect because, as he stated, the concepts are constructions which are shaped by the power structure and the academic dialogue of the specific time (As quoted by Nongbri, 2003) .

Ray (1973) discusses whether the tribes are indigenous to India in comparison to non-tribes especially Aryans. In this context, he stated: "the communities of people of today whom the anthropologists call tribes, happen to be the indigenous, autochthonous (adivasi, adimjati) people of the land , in the sense that they had long been settled in different parts of the country before the Aryan speaking people penetrated India to settle down first, in the Kabul and Indus valleys and then[,] within a millennium and [a] half , to spread out in slow stages, over large areas of the country and push their way of life and civilisation over practically the entire area of the country along the plains and the river valleys (ibid, 124-125; also quoted in Xaxa, 2008, 33) .

Dube (1977) while discussing the issue stated that the question of the tribes being the original inhabitant of the land is important one considering the migratory nature of the tribes. He further stated that the absorption into the Hindu society may complicate the issue. He said: "it is difficult to speak of 'original' inhabitants, for tribal traditions themselves make repeated mention of [the] migration of their ancestors. There is considerable evidence to suggest that several groups were pushed out of the areas where they were first settled and had to seek shelter elsewhere. And

there are several groups, now absorbed in Hindu society, which can make an equally tenable claim to being original or, at any rate, very old inhabitants (Dube, 1977, 2; also quoted in Xaxa, 2008,).

Thus the question of tribes as indigenous people is connected with the question of whether they are original inhabitant of the land. But, besides this, it also has the connotation of identity, which denotes positive esteem of the tribes. Although, they can accepted as indigenous people considering the fact that they were outside the process of colonisation, but the demands of indigenous status in a territory also has a political connotation which require to have proper document to see whether the tribes are inhabitant of the area throughout history. The debate of indigenous people and the context of tribes in India need to be seen in the broader framework of the specificity of the social history of the communities in India, socio-political changes and the broader issue of tribal identify.

2.3. Conclusion:

From the discussion in the chapter, it can be inferred that tribes is a distinct social category with specific demography, language, religions and the occupation patterns. These general features of tribes signify the nature of tribes as social group.

The conceptualisation of tribes in the Indian context requires understanding of the approach of the administrator as well as social scientist to have a comprehensive picture. The tribes are understood as distinct social category different from the other communities in the socio-economic and political situation. The distinctiveness need to be emphasised because any changes that are introduced from outside their society without considering these specificities may led to contradictions. The understanding of the tribes is essential in the study of tribal development considering the separate socio-economic and cultural features of the tribes. The debates in the international level about the right of the indigenous people initiate debate about the approach toward tribes in India because tribes are understood as categories similar to indigenous people because of their social organisation as well as its historical specificity. Such debate is at two levels: whether tribes can be conceptualised as indigenous people and if yes, what are the specific treatments needed for tribes as indigenous people. But the international debate rests on political

rights of indigenous people and has less to offer for the displacement and dispossession caused by economic growth and development.

Chapter 2

Tribal Development in India: Issues of Conflict

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Tribal Development in India: Issues of Conflict

In this chapter an attempt has been made to see issues of conflict that are inherent in the approaches to tribal development. There is an attempt to understand the specificity of the situation of tribes in relation to the nature and the changing nature of this relation and inherent issues of conflict therein. The chapter can be divided into two parts: one aspect dealing with the attempt to understand the relation of the tribes with nature and on the other hand it tries to see the changing relation of the tribes with nature in the name of development and the conflict thus created by understanding the approaches to the land, forest and agriculture which constitute three important domains of tribes development. In this context various laws and policies adopted by the colonial and post colonial government towards lands and forest are also analysed to understand the basic structural causes of the conflict in the process of tribal development.

3.1 Development and Environment:

“The attempt to achieve modern industrial growth has been based on two interrelated processes: one the unchecked use of the earth’s natural resources; and two, the transformation of people, often against their will, into a dispossessed working class.” (Baviskar, 1995, p35) It is seen that, the ideology of ‘national’ development has been used to legitimize exploitation. (ibid, 35)

There is an unbroken relation of the development with the unchecked use of the earth’s natural resources which has drastic affects on those people who have marginal economy in the sense that they are directly dependent on those resources by exploiting them with the help of rudimentary technology. The unchecked exploitation of the natural resources in the name of development has lead to the dispossession of these marginalised communities, making them working class in the whole process. (ibid)

3.1a. Political Ecology and Cultural Politics Approach as Framework for Understanding the Resources Exploitation:

The political ecology approach is recent and one of the most interesting approach for understanding the natural resource exploitation in the name of 'national' development. Here, there is emphasis on the issue of social equality and justice, which are at conflict over the use of natural resources. Thus, such a perspective is involved in studying social movements that addresses the international audience over the question of threatened livelihoods by the state lead extractive development. Thus, it studies the asymmetries of power over the exploitation of natural resources and such studies are seen in the form of binary opposites of the civil society versus state, 'virtuous peasants' versus 'vicious state'. (Bernstein, 1990, also referred in Baviskar, 2003, 5052) But, one need to question the process itself , as the representation of the debate may lead to further marginalisation of the dispossessed groups by the way of representation that ignore the collective representation created by the activist.(ibid, 2003)

Baviskar argues that political ecology approach assumes cultural identities as pre-formed i.e they are derived directly from the objective sets of interests based on the shared locations in terms of the class, gender and ethnicity. (ibid, 2003, 5052) She further mentioned that the primary significance of the natural resources is due to their material use value and it led to conflict. For eg, the conflict over the use of forest is because of the fact that the trees represent different uses and values for different social groups, simultaneously at the same time. On the basis of it, cultural politics suggests that mode of appropriation is associated with the value that the natural resources have within the larger economy of signification. Thus, as a collective representation, it exceeds the concern with immediate material use. (ibid, 2003)

The main argument of the cultural politics approach is that politics of natural resources, the identities formed in the process are not given but are produced in the process of cultural production. Thus, the cultural politics approach to natural resources is associated with the reproduction and challenge over the inequalities and exclusion over the use of natural resources. Along with the understanding of the

asymmetric working of power in the political ecology approach; the cultural politics has greater appreciation of the making of history by the people in the situation of experience (Baviskar, 2003) making 'culture itself as a site of political struggle' (ibid).

3.1b. Ecological Marxism:

Ecological Marxism is a theoretical understanding of development which asserts that development as a process exploits labouring classes along with nature. (Baviskar, 1995, 37) But it needs to be emphasised that environmental havoc of industrialisation was not subject of analysis of Marx and hence it will be failure to look for authentic ecological perspective in the Marx's philosophy. (Clark, 1989) But, when we have a deeper analysis of the work of the Marx, we can say that when Marx was opposing commodification (a process which reduces all products to a common economic matrix thereby negating its intrinsic worth), he was actually supporting environmentalism. (Baviskar, 1995)

Ecological Marxism has inspiration to study the problems of ecology in Marxist terms. As like Marxists, the ecological Marxism argue that unequal access to the resources can be better understood in terms of the patterns and processes of environmental degradation in India. When it is explained in Marxist terms as the problem of economics and politics, it can be said that while the rich destroy the nature with the motive of profit; it is essential for the poor to do so for their survival. Therefore, the ecological Marxists strive for creation of economically just society that can lead to achieve the goal of social and ecological justice. It broadly means the redistribution of the economic and political power for the greater benefits of the poor. (Gadgil and Guha, 2000)

Thus, Ecological Marxism assumes that the environmental conflict inherent in the nature of social relation itself.

There is power dimension working over the use of resources and conflict arises when those communities which have more close relation to nature and natural resources can not appropriate them because they are less powerful vis-a-vis state or more powerful capitalist. Some scholars see it as the contradiction of the capitalism. They see the development process as the capitalist agenda associated with the

exploitation of resources. There is a process of commodification of the natural resources like land, mineral, forest and water by the national elites through the institution of state and market in the name of development. This exploitation is due to unequal access to power which lead to the exploitation of the resources by the national elites (by the means of power that they have because of capital.) This is associated with the impoverishment of the earth's natural resources making it unsustainable for the future generation. For people like O'connor, this is the contradiction between ever expanding circulation of capital and nature. (O'connor, 1988, also quoted in Baviskar, 1995) Thus, we see that increasing power of capital is associated with the deprivation of earth of its natural resources.

Socio-historical studies have helped us to understand how the collision of capital and state power has lead to increased extraction of the earth's resources.

For a large part of the world, colonisation marked the beginning of the mass or industrial scale of exploitation of natural resources.

3.2a. Colonialism and Indigenous People's Access to Land and Forest:

The colonialism marks an important change in the nature of resource exploitation. The relation of the people with the nature and the natural resources changed drastically with the advent of the colonial mode of administration. The technology that the people use for the resource use was the bone of contention till today , explaining them as unviable and unproductive, but in the real sense they are more sustainable and less exploitative than the modern technology , which not only creating danger to the natural resources, but the very existence of the local communities are also in danger. It is because the technology used by the primitive community aimed at the resource exploitation for the subsistence needs. But the modern technology that are for the large scale resource exploitation for the profit of the state deprives the others from the use of the natural resources in future.

Sundar (2008) sees the colonial period is watershed in the whole process because of three reasons in the place like Bastar:

“First, the colonial situation meant that the primary impulse for the extension of the administrative institutions did not come from changing exigencies of local society but from the colonial authorities' perception of the structures necessary to

govern...secondly, contrary to the popular perception, 'frontier areas' like Bastar were not isolated from the rest of the larger economy in the pre-colonial period. Colonialism's distinctive contribution was not in integrating these regions into some wider system, but in changing the terms of this integration... thirdly, and finally then, we come to what several writers have argued was one of the most fundamental aspects of the exercise of colonial power: the creation of sociological and epistemological categories through, and other state-organised activities such as the production of the census records, gazetteers, official or semi-official ethnographies, grammars, linguistic surveys and land tenure records (Sundar, 2008, 4, 10).

The changing nature of integration of the local system with the wider system with the colonialism provided the material force for the change in the nature of resource use patterns. Sundar (2008) argues that the colonial transformation of the local economics and the politics was achieved through the means of administration and the legal procedure (ibid 5).

But it is important to note that, the three ways by which the colonialism have transformed the local societies, politics and economics i.e through the imposition of the alien structure of government, through the unequal integration into the larger capitalist processes and epistemological means provide the only one aspect (ibid, 11). The other aspect is the local histories and popular responses (ibid).

3.2b(i). Colonial Approach to Tribes: Excluded and Partially Excluded Area:

The approach of the British government to the tribes is that of isolation which can be dated back to the Government of India Act of 1870.

The Government of India Act of 1870 gave Governor-General in Council the power to approve and sanction as laws and regulations made by the local government (provincial or state) for the administration of certain special areas. The scheduled district act of 1874 was passed to give effect to the Government of India Act, 1870. By this act, Indian legislature empowered the local government to declare in respect to the specified tract about enactments, notification, modification etc. (A. B. Keith, A constitutional History of India, pp174-175; N. Rajgopal Aiyangar, The Government of India Act 1935(1937), p 109; as quoted in Ghurye, 1963, p 78)

After that, The Government of India Act of 1919, was passed, and section 52-A (2) of this act empowered the Governor-General in Council to declare any territory to be a backward tract and with the sanction of the secretary of state to direct that the Government of India Act shall apply to the territory with such exceptions and modifications as may be prescribed in his notifications. After that he may direct any act of the Indian legislature shall not apply to the territory or shall apply with such exceptions and modifications as he may prescribe. (N Rajagopal Aiyangar, opcit, p 110, A.B. Keith, Opcit , p265, Ghurye , 1963, 91)

British parliaments policy of helping the tribes through special provisions of concerned area in 1936, with creation of 'excluded' and 'partially excluded area' under the section 91 and 92 of the Government of India Act of 1935. There are many features which distinguishes 'excluded areas' from the 'partially excluded areas. First, although Governor have to seek the advice from the minister in the 'partially excluded areas', he function on his own discretion in the 'excluded areas'. Secondly, the expenditure in the 'partially excluded area' is votable in the legislature in contrary to 'excluded area' which is non-votable. Thirdly, the discussion on any matter regarding the 'excluded' areas needed prior consent of the governor. (Vidyarthi and Rai, 1977, 414)

Thus, British followed a policy of segregation through various acts starting from the Scheduled District Act of 1870, whereby they specify some areas as requiring some special treatments for administrative purpose. Such policies of British had vast impact on the tribal life, economy, social organisation and identity and it is still having impact in post colonial period also. The protective measures kept the region inhabited by tribes largely distant from the rest of the population which helps the tribes to maintain their own customs, culture and identity. The policy helped the tribes to maintain their own social organisation but on the practical level it was not operational in true sense. When the question of revenue or profit of the colonial government comes, they generally negate the needs of giving any protection to the areas inhabited by scheduled tribes. Again, when any development programme adopted, they are designed considering the whole country, without considering the ground realities or the historical realities of the areas of the scheduled areas.

3.2b(ii). Legacy of Colonial Policy of Segregation in Post Independence Period: Fifth and Sixth Schedule Areas:

The policy of 'excluded' and 'partially excluded areas' followed by British to the areas inhabited by tribes found its legacy in the post independence period with the designation of some tribes areas as 'fifth scheduled areas' and 'sixth scheduled areas', thereby confirming the philosophy that tribes constitute a different social category which necessitate the different treatment vis-a-vis non tribes.

The fifth Schedule under article 244(1) of the constitution defines 'schedule areas' as such areas as the president may by order declare to be scheduled areas after consultation with the Governor of the state. Any area can be declared as 'scheduled Area' under the Fifth Schedule on the basis of following criteria like the preponderance of tribes population; compactness and reasonable size of the area; a viable administrative entity such as a district, block or taluk, and economic backwardness of the area as comparing to the neighbouring areas. (Annual Report, 2010-11)

The provisions of the Scheduled areas were expected to protect and benefits the tribes by the means of the various protective policies. In these areas the governor of the state is empowered to make regulation with respect to the prohibition or restriction of transfer of lands from tribes and regulation of the business of money lending to the member of the Scheduled tribes. Governor is also empowered to direct that any particular act of the parliament or state legislature shall not apply to the respective scheduled areas or apply with such exceptions or modifications as he deemed fit through public notifications. Besides, the governor of the state need to submit report to the president annually or whenever asked for about the administration of the scheduled areas. In this context, union government may direct to the state regarding the administration of the 'schedule areas'. There is also the provision in every state having schedule areas, for the establishment of the 'Tribes Advisory Councils' (TAC) whose role will be to advise the state government on the matter of welfare and advancement of the scheduled tribes in the state, or when governor asked or refer to it. Besides these, The Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act, 1996, also contain some of the provisions of benefits of the scheduled tribes. (Annual Report, 2010-2011)

On the other hand, the sixth schedule of the constitution of India under the article 244 of the constitution paves the way for administration of 'tribal areas' through Autonomous District / Regional Councils in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. Here, 'tribal areas' means areas with preponderance of tribal population or where sixth schedule is applicable. For the administration of such areas Autonomous District Councils having not more than thirty Members have been set up; and given some legislative , executive and judicial powers. (ibid)

The legislative, executive and judicial functions delegated to the District or regional Councils to make them autonomous institutions. Thus, it is clear from the above discussions that the basic ethos of the fifth and sixth schedule areas is to make the tribes areas economically self sufficient with administration as the self governing institution thereby reducing the outside influence in legislative, judicial and the executive matters. Besides, it also clearly shows that tribal culture and social organisation are different from the non tribes thereby requiring different and distinct approach. But the efficient implementation of the provisions of the fifth and sixth schedule requires a sympathetic attitude from the state along with responsible administrative machinery.

3.3. Nehru's Philosophy for Tribal Development:

Five principles mentioned by Pt Jawaharlal Nehru as principles underlying the constitutional provisions for the tribal development, in his forward to Elwin's 'A Philosophy for NEFA' signifies an important change in the policy towards tribes. These principles later worked as guide for tribal development with the basic inherent ethos of 'integration' of tribes, although nowhere ever, this word were used. Thus, 'isolation-assimilation' debate got reduce to approach of 'integration' with Nehru's advocacy, although such guideline given by Nehru seen more in the context of north-east India considering the specificity of the context and social organisation rather than in the tribal region of the mainland India where an approach of assimilation found its use. (Xaxa, 2008)

The basic principles given by Nehru in his forward of Elwin's (1960b) 'A Philosophy for NEFA' are: first principle stated that the people should develop along the lines 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. Second

principle advocated respect of the tribal rights in land and forests. Third principle stated that we should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical persons from outside will, no doubt, are needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into the tribal territory. Fourth principle mentioned that we should not over administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should try to work through and not in rivalry to their social and cultural institutions. According to the fifth principle of Nehru, we should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of the human character that is evolved. (Elwin, 1960c)

Nehru's approach to the tribal development had very encouraging philosophy, although it failed to come into reality. Nongbri (2003) maintained that the Nehru's five principles of the tribal development reflect his sensitivity and his concern for preserving the tribal heritage. She said, "While these principles reflect Pandit's Nehru's lofty ideals and aesthetic value, at the same time, they reveal that under his cloak of sophistication and humanism laid an astute political mind." (Nongbri, 2003, 66) It is because, in a large country like India having people of diverse ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds, it is essential that the development policies should be designed in such a way that they do not become the instrument of cultural domination. (ibid, 2003, 66) But when we look into the implementation of this philosophy of Nehru, they show negative trend as the development agenda of the tribes in India is cursed of being insensitive to the tribal life and culture creating disorientation in their socio-economic organisation.

3.4. Land and Tribal Development:

The colonial mode of production and then development projects in the post independence period has brought far reaching changes in to the nature of the relation of tribes to land.

The tribal conception of land was not as private property, but as a community property which the members of the whole community have the right to access and the collective right of control.

Along with the sources of livelihood for tribes, land is also connected with their sense of history and is a symbol of their social prestige. (Elwin, 1963, 50; also quoted in Ambagudia, 2010, 61) Tribes have a very long history of their association with the land and they are generally seen as the descendent of the original inhabitant of the land. There is development of a holistic knowledge of their land, natural resources and their environment over the generation. (Ambagudia, 2010, 61) Land and forest constitute the twin pillar of the tribal economy. The entire life of the tribe is centred on these two resources, and the relationship with the two, especially with land is something like their 'philosophy of life' (Rao, 1987, 89; also quoted in Ambagudia, 2010, 61)

3.4a. Communal Ownership of Land Versus Private Property: Some Perspectives:

There are different perspectives on the communal ownership of property, especially land.

Gandhi was well known to provide an idealistic perspective over the individual ownership of the property. He said that although possession right over the property by the individual will give him the basic necessity, but it will deprive him of the right of unlimited possession. (As quoted in Roy Burman, 1992, 138). Here, we can see that individual greed is against the need of the greater welfare.

There are views which regards land as social asset and thus to be use by the community. In this context, Kumarappa has noted:

“The land is a social asset and it has got to be utilised exactly as is need for the community. If a man says, ‘I have got so many acres of land, I am going to grow tobacco’, he has no right to grow tobacco simply because it may bring him more money....From the parasitic stage, we advance on through the predatory and enterprising stages to the gregarious type (the pack type which represents the right-centred economy and the herd type which represent the duty centred economy).... In the final stage he reaches the service economy in which he realises the services of others ...The Western... economy of the pack-type aggregation ultimately lead to the conflict and destructionwe have to study how man should act in a group and as a

group be able to work towards an economy of permanence (Kumarappa, 1945, 124-125, c.f. Roy Burman, 1992, 138-139)

It is not like that idealistic perspective of the communal ownership of property and the use of land is confined only to the context of India. At the international level also, we can see such emphasis. For example, scholar like James Scott (1976) have argued that the access to land for land based production and transaction is associated with the diverse systems of moral economy in the diverse historical and ecological contexts for the peasants and tribes. (As referred in Roy Burman, 1992, 139)

Thus, we can see that the communal ownership of land is regarded as morally superior act for the greater benefits of the group.

The issue of the communal ownership of the land by the tribes have undergone change during the colonial period. In this context, Justice Hidayatullah (1983) gave a legal approach to the issue. For Hidayatullah (1983, 25), the first attempt to separate the individual from the old tradition of the community was made by British. (Nongbri, 2003, 122)

He also observed that land as property is always associated with the political function of the group and its importance increases with the increasing political activities of the group. He argued:

“It is well to remember that property on land is always linked to the political function of a group with its social economy. When the importance of land increased, political activity increased many fold. The property in land of the members of a clan or tribes had a dual meaning. While the devolution of the property was from the community to the individual, the devolution was subject to the control of the community. It could then be said that it belong simultaneously to the community and the individual.” (Hidayatullah, 1983, 21-25, also quoted in Roy Burman, 1992, 142)

From the above discussions, some of the important inferences can be drawn regarding the nature of relationship of the individuals and the collectivity with the land and the land based resources. It can be seen that to have a real picture of such relations, it is more important to see the pattern of access and possession along with their terms and conditions and sources of their legitimisation, rather than formal status of ownership only. (Roy Burman, 1992, 142)

3.5. Agrarian Situation:

3.5a. Issues of Shifting Cultivation:

Shifting cultivation is a mode of agriculture mainly prevalent in the north-eastern part of India, in the Nilgiris and the Andaman Islands and some parts of eastern and central India. Shifting cultivation is also known as slash and burn cultivation or bush fallow agriculture as it involves clearing a piece of forest, mixed cropping in that land till it get exhausted and then going to another piece of forest by keeping the land fallow to regain the fertility. The use of rudimentary technology is another feature of this cultivation and is thus regarded as primitive form of agriculture.

There are many criticisms against the shifting cultivation because it is taken as unsustainable and environmentally destructive as it associated with large scale deforestation and soil erosion. But it is to be noted that considering the tribal ecology and social organisation, it is not only viable but most practical form of agriculture. So the attempts of the colonial administration to take shifting cultivation as primitive and unproductive was criticised by various scholars and they see it as attempt of the British government to make the revenue generation possibility more viable. In this context Guha and Gadgil (1989) have remarked that "...almost without exception, colonial administrators viewed (shifting cultivation) with disfavour as a primitive and unenumerative form of agriculture in comparison with plough cultivation. Influenced both by the agricultural revolution in Europe and the revenue generating possibilities of intensive (as opposed to extensive) forms of cultivation, official hostility to (shifting cultivation) gained an added impetus with the commercialisation of the forest. Like their counterparts in other parts of the globe, British foresters held (shifting cultivation) to be the most destructive of all practices for the forest, not the least because it competed with timber operations. (Guha and Gadgil, 1989, 152; also quoted in Baviskar, 1995, 69) Thus, the main motive of the British was the exploitation of the natural resources including timbers along with the large extraction of the revenue, and the conflict of these objectives with the economy of shifting cultivation made the Britishers to oppose it.

The environmental issues raised against the shifting agriculture are deforestation and soil erosion. But, a close look at the tribal ecology presents a contradictory picture.

Some scholars have argued that although the shifting cultivation involves deforestation but the approach that the planners and the state have been adopting to the issue is unrealistic. It is because, there is suggestion to shift to terraced cultivation but a more practical way would have been to show that plantation of forest would be more productive and a better market exist for it or to give land for the agriculture elsewhere. (Mishra, 1976; Xaxa, 2008)

Similarly, we can see the issue of soil erosion. Some scholars have argued that the criticism raised against the shifting cultivation as one of the main agent causing soil erosion is without looking into the issue whether rate of soil formation is less than rate of soil erosion. They further argue that if the soil erosion can be prevented with the help of horticulture or terrace cultivation; then jhuming will also not lead to any soil erosion. (Mishra, 1976, 80-84; Xaxa, 2008, 104) In this context, it is interesting to note that shifting cultivation is not only viable but most practical form of agriculture in the steep slope. Here, we can refer to the observation made by the M.S. Sivaraman, advisor to the programme administration of the Planning Commission in 1957. He observed:

“It is a mistake to assume that shifting cultivation in itself is unscientific land use. Actually, it is a practical approach to certain inherent difficulties in preparing a proper seedbed on steep slopes where any disturbance of the surface by hoeing or ploughing will result in washing away of the fertile topsoil. The tribal people therefore take care not to plough or disturb the soil before sowing. The destruction of weeds and implement of tilt necessary for a proper seedbed are achieved with the help of fire.” (As quoted in Bhowmik, 1976, 8; also quoted in Xaxa , 2008, 104)

Shifting cultivation is regarded as the most accepted land use system for the tribes for various reasons.

First, shifting cultivation is the most adopted mode of agriculture for the tribes and is based on their irreplaceable accumulated knowledge over the centuries. (Pathy,

1992, 211) Besides, it is energy efficient mode of agriculture which needs very low input, mainly family labour. (ibid, 211-212)

Shifting cultivation is a mixed cropping which ensures many benefits for the tribes livelihood. Besides providing the diverse mineral for the soil, it also checks the crop from the damage by various insects and pests. (ibid, 212)

Even the social organisation of the tribes is more beneficial for the shifting cultivation. Collective ownership of land and control by the chief helps in taking collective works like clearing of forest etc which is not viable for work by an individual family.(ibid, 213)

Thus, the shifting cultivation is practical and most viable mode of cultivation for the tribes considering the specificity of the tribes' ecology and social organisation. The attempt made by the state to change it to permanent agriculture is associated with many difficulties.

3.5b. Settled Agriculture and Changing Class Relations:

The most dominant form of agriculture is settled agriculture. "While less than one-tenth of the tribes live by shifting cultivation, over four-fifth are directly or indirectly associated with settled cultivation." (Pathy, 1992, 216) Again, there is pressure from the government agencies to switch over from the shifting to the settled cultivation.

The changing pattern of land ownership and control is of immense interest in such condition. Because, the communal ownership of land is not suitable in case of settled agriculture and thus it require individual ownership and control. The change from communal ownership to the individual ownership of land is associated with the changing social and class relations also. In the initial period, favourable land-man ratio (Pathy, 1992) made it possible for any individual family to clear a piece of forest and use for individual use. But, the increasing pressure on land created a condition in which land became scarce. Besides, the introduction of the market system made the land a commodity, thereby a thing that can be bought and sold. New class formation takes place in the society on the basis of ownership and the control of the land along with the other property. Thus, nature of class formation changes with the individual

ownership of land changing the social organisation as well. In this context, Pathy (1992) has noted:

“The inequality in the land control is equally explicit with respect to individual villages and every tribal group. The greater the size of the land, there is more or less proportionately high control of livestock, agricultural inputs, marketable surplus, employment of wage labour, income, ownership of important consumer goods, better houses and greater access to education, formal political organisation and liberal institutional credit. (Pathy, 1992, 219; 1984, 108-120)

3.5c. Agrarian Classes:

Pathy (1992) has stated that while the inequality in the size of holding denotes agrarian differentiation, essence of class analysis is the appropriation of surplus labour. He further stated that first stage is the class division into landlords and peasants on the basis of whether or not one uses labour in the process of production. (ibid, 219) He further divided them into following ways:

“Those who contribute labour may do so only on their own farm (peasantry) or on leased land (tenants) or on other’s farms (wage labour) or a combination of these forms. Conversely, for the cultivation of their own farm they may use only household labour (small/middle peasants), or, only hire-in labour/ lease out land(landlords / capitalist farmers), or, only hire in labour while a minor part of the labour requirement is met by the household labour (rich peasants) , or, mainly hire –out labour while a minor part of the total potential household labour is used on their own farm (small peasants), or only hire out labour in agriculture as the main sources of living (agricultural labour). (Pathy, 1992, 219)

Again, he stated that when the dimension of subsistence and reproduction is added to the matrix of the class structure, it will become more precise. (ibid, 219-220) He further noted:

“Accordingly, the additional feature of the classes would be: the ability to subsist and reproduce (middle peasant), inability to subsist without expansion of the scope of exploited existence (small peasant), absence of a guarantee to reproduce itself even after participating in the wider exploitative network (farm worker), ability to generate a surplus of which a portion is reinvested (rich peasant), and , ability to have a surplus

but which is used chiefly for simple reproduction and not expanded reproduction(landlord). (Pathy, 1992, 220)

3.5d. Agrarian Restructuring and the Mode of Exploitation:

The process of exploitation of the tribes associated with the agrarian restructuring is getting interest among the social scientist in the recent times.

K.S. Singh (1985) gave a vivid picture of the process of exploitation that has been taking place in the tribal society in the process of agricultural restructuring. He argue that the process of exploitation take place by means of complex processes that involve the breakdown of the communal mode of production , penetration of market forces into the tribal economy and ultimately it is shaped by ‘peasantization’ and ‘depeasantization’ process.

Singh said that the breakdown of the communal mode of production and the emergence of private right in land is most noticeable feature of the colonial period. (Singh, 1985, 12) He said that along with this, there is a transformation of the tribes from the reclamer of land into peasant cultivators. (ibid)

He further said that in the next stage of the development of the peasant system, market forces penetrated into tribal economy, which is followed by introduction of monetised economy by the colonial system. The commodity production on smaller scale and their dependence on international market made the tribes vulnerable. Along with these change, as Singh argue, tribes were forced for cash cropping thereby opening the scope for eviction from their own land. (ibid, 13)

Another aspect of the introduction of the market economy is the arrival of the middle men, merchants and money lenders; who are although alien to the local situation but their function of middle men and money lender paved the way for land grabbing. (ibid, 13)

The argument put forward by Singh is that both the process of ‘peasantization’ and ‘depeasantization’ were working simultaneously and the latter is taken as indicator of the large scale alienation of land from tribes to non-tribes. (ibid, 13)

Xaxa (2008) have argued that the process of land alienation had started with the British rule and administration. He further asserted that introduction of the private

property on land and penetration of market forces into the tribes areas together opened –up the roads for the alienation of lands from the tribes to non-tribes. He said that the large protective measures initiated in this respect are highly unsuccessful. He further argues that the nature of alienation of tribal lands changed in post- independence period when major sources of land alienation is the development policy followed by the Indian state. (ibid, 64) He said-“Large scale industrialisation, exploitation of mineral resources, and construction of irrigation dams and power projects in the tribes areas during the period have uprooted more people from their lands than all the other factors put together.” (ibid, 64)

3.6. Tribal Culture and Forest:

The close association of the tribes with the forest was traditionally non-intrusive and symbiotic in nature. It not only helped the tribes for their survival, but tribes are also beneficial for the development of the forests. In this context, we can refer to Fernandes (1993), who argue that the tribes had constructive dependence on forests and other natural resources. But, the industrial clear felling and the displacement for the development projects have resulted in the transition to destructive dependence on the natural resources. (Fernandes, 1993, 48)

The tribal dependence on the forest is seen by the fact that although the staple food of the tribes are rice, dal and vegetables (for settled cultivators), the leaves, flowers, seeds, roots and various types of fruits collected from the forest also constitute an integral part of their diet (Xaxa, 2008, 102). Fernandes (1993) maintained that tree and plants constitute 50 percent of the food value in the place of shifting cultivation. He further said that produce from the forests satisfies 50 percent of the food requirement of the tribes, while some other scholars estimated it to be as high as 80 percent. (Fernandes, 1993, 48; Xaxa, 2008, 103)

The tribes are also dependent on forest for making various tools and the implements of daily use along with the construction materials for their houses. (Xaxa, 2008, 103)

Medicinal herbs, various flowers, leave etc are collected from the forests for treatment of various kinds of diseases. Fernandes and his colleagues, in their study of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh identified 40 trees and more than 50 herbs use for

medicinal purpose. Similarly, a study of the tribes medicine in Kerala found that at least 39 species of roots, 15 species of fruits, 30 of leaves, 12 of bark and many types of flowers, latex etc find common use for the medicinal purpose. (Fernandes, 1993, 51; also quoted in Xaxa, 2008, 103)

The tribes are also dependent on the forest for a huge portion of their monetary income, mainly by selling firewood. Although, many criticisms raised against this saying that tribes are main agent of forest destruction, but various studies have shown that for tribes, the main source of income is not firewood, but non-wood forest produce(NWFP) like lac, kath, bamboo, leaves, flower and fruits (Fernandes, 1993, Xaxa, 2008, 103-104,) which do not cause direct destruction to the forest cover.

But the main issue of the tribal relation with the forest is that tribes are understood as the destroyer of the forest and if the situation is somewhat closer to the tribes, it sees the lower level forest official and the contractor causing the destruction of the forest by their conflict of interest with the tribes. But such studies failed to look at the historical processes of the tribal relation with the forest by reducing them to the macro issue to structural relation. (Roy Burman, 1994) While discussing the symbiotic relation that the tribes have with the forest, Roy Burman has cited an observation of a Chief Minister of a state inhabited by tribes. Chief Minister observed “Our state is sparsely populated and per capita we have large tracts of land and forest. We have inhabited the region for generations since unknown time. We maintained large forests, as our whole way of life was inextricably linked up with forest. We did not have any problem of large scale soil erosion, except for localised ones and those caused by nature’s work like earthquake. But after the scientific forestry was introduced, forest started disappearing rapidly and the soil erosion became a nonstop menace.” (As quoted in Roy Burman, 1994, 125)

As a explanation to this observation of the Chief Minister, Roy Burman (1994) observed that “ the ground level reality is that the tribes and the other forest dwellers including the shifting cultivators have their indigenous systems of relatively sustainable use of forest, forest products and other land based endowments of nature and ignoring the same, use pattern of forest land and forest products were changed for commercial industrialisation, armament production and feudal and later capitalist agriculture and horticulture by the colonial rulers and their successors since the 19th

century. This reduced the access to forest area and the forest products for the forest dwellers, forcing them to make imprudent use to the forest which they have been nurturing for generations. (ibid, 125) Thus, the forest dwellers are forced to change from the symbiotic user of the forest to depend on vary reduced amount of forest left by the process of industrialisation which forced them to go for forest designated as reserved forest for their subsistence, that ultimately give them the wrong fame of the 'destroyer' of the forest.

3.6a. Forest Administration in India:

The study of forest administration in India is essential to study the changing role of state and its role in changing relation of the people with the nature. The forests laws and policies are designed keeping in mind the broader social and political conditions of the country for the greater benefits of the state. The forest administration in India can be divided into following three stages:

1. Pre colonial,
2. Colonial
3. Post colonial.

3.6a (i). Forest Administration in Pre Colonial Period:

Although the immediate antecedent of the present day reserved forest and protected areas are traced back to the British period, but the concept of the reserved forest is much older and it dated back to 321 B.C.in the northern India. But this is based on the various translations and the secondary works and thus it only works as suggestive of the longevity of the forestry in India. (Vasan, 2006) It is estimated that before this period, forest was personal property of the ruler. (Chatterjee, n.d.; c.f Vasan, 2006) The first description of the forest department can be found in the Kautilya's *Arthashastra* , where he mentioned about the administration of the forest by a *Kupyadhyaksa* (Superintendent of Forest Products) and assisted by a number of *Vanapalas* (Forest Guards). (ibid) There were mainly three kinds of forests mentioned in the *Arthashastra*: reserve forests, forest donated to eminent *Brahmanas*, and the forest for public which could only be used for hunting purposes. (ibid)

The forest had important place in India from the ancient times as revealed by the Mahabharata and Ramayana in their description of the forest life in the *dandakaranya* and *nandavana*. There are instances of the rulers encouraging the plantation in the public places like Ashoka and Shivaji issued orders which encouraged the planting of trees along the roads and on the camping sites and prohibits the cutting of the important trees like the fruit trees. Another important feature of the period was that the people's use of the trees was mainly done through the local customs. Even there are instances where the trees in the temple are regarded as sacred and the cutting is prohibited. (Kulkarni, 1987)

The pre British administration in India gave more space to the forests dwellers to manage their own affairs in their own discretion. The geographical and natural calamities had forbidden control and interference of the state and also kept the population of tribes in check. (Fuch, 1992, 373)

The nature of ownership of land at this period was communal and the vast availability of the land made it possible for anyone, whoever occupied a plot of land to become its owner. The ownership of land in case of shifting cultivation was with the clan or the village community. (ibid)

Fuch argued that feudalism developed during Maurya and Gupta dynasties and there is the division of the rights of the land among the chiefs of the state, the village communities and the individual cultivators. (Fuch, 1992, 373) He said that the state claimed the ownership of land and in that sense they collected the produce through the tributary chiefs or the feudatory princes and similar rights of the state was extended to forest and its produce. (ibid, 373) It needs to mention that, a class of forest official called *Gaulmikas* during the Gupta periods that were mainly responsible for the collection of revenues. (Chatterjee, n.d., 25; as referred in Vasan, 124-125)

3.6a(ii). Forest Administration in the Colonial Period:

The memorandum by the Governor General Dalhousie in 1855 about the conservation of forest is said to be the beginning of the forest policy of British in India. One of the main suggestions was for declaring teak as state property and suggestion for strictly regulating the trade of the teak. (Kulkarni, 1987; Fuch, 1992, 375)

The Indian Forest Act was drafted in 1865, which paved the way for the state control and management of forest but at the same time, it restrained the rights of the

forest dwellers whereby they do not give any attention to their sustenance. It was the first instance of the regulation of the collection of the forest produce by the forest dweller, which open up the scope for the control of the socially regulated practices by the state laws. (ibid)

The Indian Forest Act of 1865 was revised in 1878 thereby giving more control of state over forests. The Act was more comprehensive than the earlier one and it divided the forest into three categories: Reserved forest, protected forests and the village forests. (Kulkarni, 1987, 2144) Some of the important provisions of the Act were imposing duty on the timber, prohibition of the pasturing of the cattle etc. There was provision of the imposition of the fines and the imprisonment for the various offences declared by the forest. (ibid)

Although this act allowed the persons who made claim about land and forest produce to come forward to prove their claim on record, but they could not materialise the claim due to operational difficulty. First, they did not understand the official procedure and second they did not have any documentary proof in support of their claims. The end result is that they are deprived off their own property. (Fuch, 1992) The Bill was criticised as being too arbitrary and also for the rights that it had vested on the forest department to determine the rights of the forest dwellers. (Roy Burman, 1994)

Then the Forest Policy Resolution of 1894 came. The rights of the tribes over the forests were restricted further in the name of 'public interest' but the irony is that the welfare of the tribes was not included in the 'public interest'. (Fuch, 1992, 375) One of the main interest of the bill is that the forest should serve the interest of the agriculture more than before (Roy Burman, 1994) and it was specified that when there is any claim for land for cultivation from the forest area, such claim should be granted without much hesitation. But emphasis was given for raising the finances of the state. (Kulkarni, 1987) The resolution classified the forest into four categories: the forest that necessitated the preservation because of the physical or the climatic reasons, the forest from which the supply of the valuable timber for the commercial purposes can be afforded, the forests categorised as minor forest and the pasture lands. This classification was applicable only for the state forest and there was suggestion for not declaring the wasteland as forest. (ibid)

The rules that the forest department codified since the Act of 1894 were confirmed by the Indian Forest Act of 1927. Similar situation arises, when the

colonial law in the name of administration exploit the forest and its produce only for the revenue interest. The Indian Forest Act of 1927 was made to regulate the rights of the people over the forest land and the produce to a greater extent and there were some provision which try to take over the management of the private land also. (ibid)

The introduction of the British administration had brought a new form of administration and legal system which is alien to the indigenous system. The British policy towards forests accusing the forests dwellers as exploiter of forest was vested in their interest of the revenue collection. In the process, they completely ignored the indigenous people's rights over the resources and their livelihood. Guha (1983) while highlighting the exploitative nature of the colonial forestry argue that that the intervention of the colonial state in the forestry was negative as it intervene the existing symbiotic relation that existed over the centuries between the communities residing in forest over the land. (Gadgil and Guha, 1993, also referred in Vasan, 2006) Besides, their study could highlight the lacuna of the British policy because of their implicit importance for the revenue extraction and meeting their market demands. (ibid)

Although, the work of Gadgil and Guha (1993) able to bring about major shift in the nature of thinking about the colonial forestry, they were criticised by the latter thinkers mainly due to their two postulation. (Vasan, 2006) They were: first, their presentation of the pre-colonial forestry as positively sustainable along with steady nature of relationship between society and nature and secondly the projection of the colonial projects as uni-dimensional and homogenous projects. (ibid) In this context, Vasan (2006) have highlighted the work of Richard Grove who argues that "the long colonial period in India cannot be viewed as one era with unchanging, homogenous interests, objectives and influences. She finds distinct differences in the ideological preoccupations of the colonial officials of the early nineteenth century and those that followed them at the end of the century. Moreover, he maintains that the sphere of influences that shaped the British Indian forest policy was broader than merely revenue considerations. Experiences of British officials outside India, such as experiences of the environmental consequences of rapid degradation in island colonies that were much more clearly visible, influenced Indian forest policy. (Vasan, 2006, 8)

We see that the colonial forestry was criticised not only because of its exploitation in terms of revenue extraction but also because ignoring the rights of the indigenous people like tribes over the property. Even the Britisher like Voelcker, who was a consulting chemist to the Agricultural Society remarked about the interest of the Britishers to extract revenue when he said “when it [the forest department] began its work its chief duties were preservation and the developments of large timber forests...its success was gauged mainly by fiscal considerations...The forest department was practically called upon to show a large revenue and was naturally proud of the profits it made.(Voelcker, 1893 ; as quoted by Kulkarni, 1987, 2143) In this context Fuch (1992) noted that when the question of the use of the forest for the revenue purpose came, the Britishers ignored the fact that it was the original property of the tribes , and their benefit is totally neglected for the benefit of the nation. He said:

“When the British colonial government took over the administration of the whole sub-continent of India, its officials saw in the Indian forests a welcome and important source to be exploited for the purposes of revenue and export...The British completely ignored the fact that the forest was in fact the original property of the tribes; they regarded it as the state property to be preserved and administered for the benefit of the nation, not of a small and negligible minority like the tribes”. (Fuch, 1992, 374)

Thus, the forest policy of the British comes in clash over the ownership right of tribes over the forest against.

Scholar like Xaxa (2008) also argued that the forest policy of the colonial state is associated with the breakdown of the harmony that the tribes had maintained between the natural and social world for the centuries. (ibid, 106) He said:

“Prior to the introduction of the policy, tribes were virtually the lords of the forest, enjoying unrestrained access to forest and forest produce. The colonial policy, however, turned the situation upside down. It vested unlimited power in the state and paved the way for the state control and management of forests. This led to a drastic curtailment of the rights and privileges that the tribes had hitherto enjoyed over the

forest.... the colonial forest policy was oriented more towards profit making than towards conservation. Hence, the reclamations of forests for land cultivation, expansion of roads and railways, exploitation of mineral resources, and industrial growth assumed the form of a key economic activity during the colonial period. Needless to say, these policies led to the large scale destruction of natural resources. And yet the problems and hardships suffered by the tribes were not felt actually until the post- independence period.” (ibid, 107-108)

Thus, we see that colonial forest policy provides unending avenue for the British for the exploitation of natural resources in the name of development and revenue, they were silent or gave a blind eye to see what these policies could have effect on tribes who are directly associated with the forest for their livelihood.

3.6a (iii). Post Colonial Forest Administration:

Forest administration in the post Independence period had strong legacy of the colonial administration, and were indifferent to rights and privileges of the tribes, similar to the British administration. In fact, the New Forest Policy of 1952 had curtailed the rights of local communities in more substantial manner; even some concessions that the tribes had enjoyed during colonial period were withdrawn. (Xaxa, 2008) It curtailed the facility of free grazing, taking the tribes away from shifting cultivation. Further, this policy also aimed at increasing area under forest with the help of strict regulation and policy with the sole aim of revenue earning. This policy also fixed the aim of keeping one-third area of the country under forest.

It is irony that the forest policy of 1952 was declared to be based on ‘paramount national interest’, but in actual practice, by neglecting the welfare of the former owner of the forest, and as a result, such policy interpreted national interest in very narrow sense. (Fuch, 1992, 376) While the industrialisation and the large scale development projects had destroyed the forest in large scale , but when it come to the interest of the tribes for use of forest land and forest , they were dissuaded in the name of ‘paramount national interest’. The revenue interest of the forest department and the contractor kept the tribes at their mercy.

Dhebar Commission:

Dhebar commission was constituted by the President of India in the name 'The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission' under the chairmanship of U.N. Dhebar in 1960 to study the forest policy and its impact on tribal communities. The committee put emphasis on the vast importance that the forest have in the tribes life as it is the source of food, all kind of wild games and fish, wood for the construction of the houses and other purposes, fuel and the various other forest products which provide the income for the tribes. (Kulkarni, 1987) The commission criticised the growing authority of government on forest which is affecting the tribes' life and their economy. (ibid)

The commission while noting the changing nature of the tribes' rights over the forest commented that there is loss of the traditional rights of the tribes over the forest. It said that it was 'rights and privileges' in 1894 that became 'rights and concessions' in 1952 and ultimately reducing them to only concessions that were granted to the tribes. (ibid) Thus, the commission able to show the nature of alienation that the tribes were subjugated from the forest rights by the means of changing Forest laws.

New Forest Policy, 1988:

The New Forest Policy in 1988 was important because for the first time it recognises the traditional rights and the privileges of the tribes over forest and their symbiotic relationship with forest. Thereby, it put emphasis on protecting the interest of tribes. (Verma, 1990, 191; Xaxa, 2008, 109)

There was also emphasis on the environmental stability and maintaining ecological balance. The draft of the National Forest Policy in 1987 stated in this context;

"The principal aim of the forest policy must be to ensure environmental stability and ecological balance including atmospheric equilibrium which is vital to the sustenance of all life forms – human, animal and plant. The derivation of direct economic benefit must be subordinated to this principal aim."(As quoted in Fuch , 1992, 378)

Another important provision of the forest policy is attempt for the regularisation of 'tribal encroachment'. Although, it was not successful to provide any

tangible benefits to the tribes and there were many controversies regarding the cut-off date, this provision marks a significant change in the attitude of the state.

It recognised the role of the minor forest produce for providing the sustenance to the tribes and the other communities and thus it emphasised the need to protect, improve and enhance these products for the generation of the employment and the income. (ibid)

But there are some important lacunas in the bill which need to be mentioned. For example, the draft of the bill mentioned that rights and concessions should be for the bonafide use of the community living in and around the forest; especially the tribes and it should be within the carrying capacity of the forest. These aspects of bonafide use of the forest within the carrying capacity of the forest is a controversial one as it opened up the scope for the forest official to exploit the forest in their benefits but to restrained the tribes over their rights on forest. (ibid)

Another controversial suggestion of the draft of the Bill is that it suggested that “in order to discourage the indiscriminate entry of the people in the forests, forests produce and the substitute materials may be distributed through depots to be established by the state government. If the principle is accepted that entry of private persons into forest for collecting fuel is to be avoided, alternative arrangements for the fuel supply through depots can be augmented. (ibid, 2146) This proposition is of much danger to the interest of the tribes as the sale of the forest produce in the depot will take place by the means of auction which will keep the tribes out of the race and it will open the scope for the conflict between the tribes and the forest official. (ibid)

The Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2005:

This bill marked the sea change in the Forest policy in India and for the first time and it tried to minimise the colonial problems that were seen in the earlier policies. “The Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2005, seeks to correct the ‘historic wrong’ whereby the traditional forest rights of the tribes had been denied under British Rule. The draft bill notes that even after independence, India continued to follow the colonial forest policy, dispossessing the tribes even further. These errors were now sought to be rectified by giving a permanent stake in forests to the scheduled tribes living in forests and by associating them with forest protection

and conservation”. (Xaxa, 2008, 109) The Act drafted on the basis of this clearly mentioned in the beginning that the only way to save the forest is to involve the tribes in their management and sustainable tribal development that can reduce the pressure on the tribes. Besides, it also recognises the rights of those people who lived in the land for many generations. (Fernandes, Bharali and Kezo, 2008) Thus, this bill was important because it recognises the rights of the scheduled tribes dwelling in the forests for occupation for habitation and self cultivation for the need of their livelihood. (Xaxa, 109)

But there are many criticisms raised against the bill. While the environmentalist criticised the bill being a conservationist perspective, but the people of the fifth schedule areas see it as a wonderful opportunity to correct the injustices that have been going on against the tribes continuously for ages. (Fernandes, Bharali and Kezo, 2008) It was also criticised because bill unable to pay any adequate attention to the specificity of the north east India. It is because, “In its Statement of Objectives and Reasons it does not reflect the North Eastern context. Much of the region is administered under the provisions of Article 371 A and 371 G or the Sixth Schedule that recognise the tribal community rights over forests but the bill deal only with individual rights which apply to the Fifth Schedule areas.” (Fernandes, Bharali and Kezo, 2008, 52) Again, the bill is taken as too narrow on the issue of the addressing the historical injustice and the rights of the tribes and the forest dwellers as the bill addresses the question of the right of the scheduled tribes as individual. (ibid, 52)

3.6b. Reserved Forest and the Rights and Livelihood of the People:

The process of creation of reserved forest is aimed at maintaining a particular piece of forest for specific purpose of conservation of forest resources. The work of the state in the creation of reserved forest needs to look at with due consideration on the effect that it might have on the communities sustaining on these resources. Sudha Vasan (2006) has mentioned about four issues about the reservation of forest in the mountainous regions where the livelihood of the people linked with the forest. These issues are more or less true for the tribes as well, especially in case of north east India.

She mentioned that the first important issue in this context is the question of rights because in these regions rights of the people in the context of the forest is a

complex one as it involves the traditional and customary rights over the forest land besides the legal rights. She argues that the complex nature of social relationship and multiple notions of rights is the cause of conflict in such cases. (ibid, 130)

Second issue, as Vasan mentioned, is the debate over the major objectives behind the creation of the reserved forest. She said that there are variations in the stated objectives and the justification given over the creation of the reserved forest by the state. While the colonial forest department stated the managing the forests for the greatest good that can be given to greatest number of people, which form the logic of forest reservation, but the concept of 'greater good of the society' is highly debated one as the general evaluation shows that the in the real sense the benefits are accrued by the non-local citizens and state than the survival and progress of the local communities. (ibid, 131)

She said that the third issue is related to the question of the scientific data regarding the actual benefits of the reserved forest or non local ecological benefits are rare or extremely uncertain. They are generally presumption rather than the fact and hence the benefits of the state management of the forest versus community, group or private individual arrangements remained untested. (ibid) Therefore, it is highly contentious issue to accept the state management of the forest as only viable and scientific management system.

Vasan mentioned that the fourth issue is more contentious as it involves not only the reserved forest but all other state owned and the managed forests. It is the question of the allowing the local people to satisfy their basic needs from the forest or to actually earn the profits from the forest when these local people have the legal, traditional and customary rights over the forest. She pointed out that the issue of the meeting the 'basic needs' of the forest dwellers is a bone of contention in the present situation because in the present time everything is related to the market needs and thus to meet the basic needs like education, health, housing and food which require cash income which necessitate the sale of the forest produce for meeting the basic needs. (ibid)

Thus, the question of the state management of the reserved forest and the related issue of rights and livelihood of the communities dependent on these forests is a complex one depending on the changing nature of the social organisation,

ownership patterns of forest, changing economic patterns. The rights of the people over the forest are not taken as absolute and thus they have to depend on the state agencies for the privileges or concessions. Besides the modern economic system mostly dependent on the cash economy made the forest dwellers to sell the forest produce in the market to meet even their basic needs which is defined by the state as the encroachment over the forest resources, which is problematic.

It may be pertinent here to examine the National Policy on Tribes to have a contextual understanding of the forest policy towards tribes.

3.7 National Tribal Policy:

The first draft of the National Tribal Policy was released on 2004 which was first national policy on the Scheduled Tribes after India got Independence. The policy aimed at bringing the Scheduled tribes into the mainstream society through multi pronged approach without disturbing their distinct culture. The policy recognises that a majority of the Scheduled tribes continue to live below the poverty line with the poor literacy rate, with the high rate of malnutrition and diseases and the vulnerability to the displacement. (ibid) on the other hand, the tribal policy acknowledges the presence of the indigenous knowledge of the tribes in the respects. The basic aim of the tribal policy, as the policy document said, is to address the problems of the tribes in a concrete way so as to promote and preserve the tribal cultural heritage. (ibid)

It recognises the self reliance and the self sufficiency that the tribes have over the centuries in their health concern by the means of development of the system of the medicine by using the locally available herbs and the other items and processing them locally. The policy also acknowledges the indigenous system of the diagnosis and the cure of diseases of the tribes and on the basis of it, the policy seek to promote the modern health care system and also a synthesis of the Indian system of the medicine like ayurveda and the siddha with the tribes system.

The policy see that that nearly 85.39 lakh tribes had been displaced upto 1990 on the account of the various mega projects of development like dams , roads construction, industries, reservation of the forest as National park etc. It is observed that 55.16 percent of the total displaced people are the tribes. The process of displacement lead the tribes to leave the land and the traditional means of their

livelihood and as such cash compensation cannot be the viable means of the compensation for the tribes considering the ethos and the living style which is more dependent on the getting the livelihood from the nature.(ibid)

The policy said that there is need to keep the displacement of the tribes at minimum level and should be undertaken only when it is absolutely necessary, but the displacement should be provided with a better standard of living. (ibid)

The policy also recognises that the tribes have a symbiotic relationship with the forest. But the policy makes concern about the lack of the basic amenities in the 5000 forest villages and the constant threat of eviction that the villagers are facing. The policy suggested that the forceful eviction of the villagers from the forest villages should be avoided and recommended the conversion of the forest villages into revenue villages so that they can be developed as per with the revenue villages. (ibid)

The policy makes some highly debatable comments on the shifting cultivation. The policy stated that the tribes involved in the shifting cultivation do not have any emotional attachment and the care to the land as the non tribes. It was further criticised for not paying attention to the replenishment of the fertility of the soil. (ibid) Such an approach of the policy maker is criticised because such a view of the policy maker seems that they view the land as marketable commodity and thus they have importance on the income from it. The close link that the tribal identity and culture and land have seems to be out of knowledge of the policy makers. It is beyond doubt that the most of the ethnic conflicts that the north eastern part of India is facing is revolved around the emotional attachment that the tribes showing to the land. (Fernandes, 2004 a)

The draft of the National Tribes policy needs special attention keeping in view the tribes of the north east India. The draft suggesting the solution to the problems of the displacement and the impoverishment facing by the people in the fifth schedule areas only have neglected vast sixth schedule areas inhabited by tribe in north east India. This neglects the large number of the problems of displacement facing by the tribes of the sixth schedule areas of the north east India. (Fernandes, Bharali and Kezo, 2008)

Thus the major criticism raised against the policy was that it did not take into consideration the specificity of the north east India. The policy statement clearly stated that the major aim of the policy is to bring the tribes into the mainstream. But it is to be noted that many struggle of the people of the North east India were against the integration of them into mainstream India. (Datta, 1990, 41; as quoted in Fernandes, Bharali and Kezo, 2008)

Another criticism raised against the policy is that, at the end of the policy, there is a suggestion for the assimilation of the tribes which is against the ethos of the tribal identity and the culture.

A new draft of the National Tribal Policy was published by the Ministry of the Tribal Affairs in July 2006 which was a marked improvement over the first draft of 2004. The bill noted in its Preamble itself about the dilemma of preparing any policy about the Scheduled tribes. It noted “The dilemma in preparing any policy for the scheduled tribes in India is how to strike, the right balance between preservation of tribal identity, culture and values, protecting the tribes from being swamped by mainstream lifestyles, while increasing and ensuring their access to mainstream education, health care and income generation so that the quality of the life is improved.” (ibid)

The bill recognises that entire community of the tribes’ live is interwoven around the nature and preserving nature. It also recognises that the tribes had symbiotic relationship with the forest but the faulty process of declaring forest in the past lead to the eviction of the tribes from the traditional ownership over the land, which create a kind of physical as well as emotional alienation of the tribes. (1.10) This recognition is an important change over the earlier draft considering the fact that in the first draft of the 2004, tribes were cursed of having non-emotional attachment over the land. This policy even says that “ownership of land signifies livelihood, culture and identity in a tribal economy.”(1.11) The policy understands the effect of alienation of the tribes from the resources lead to conditions of exclusion and the impoverishment which even reduces the tribes to the status of migrant labour, rickshaw pullers and thereby further leading away from the setting socio-psychologically.

The policy also sees how the tribes are further lead to impoverishment by the process of displacement because of various development activities without any proper rehabilitation package. The irony is that these projects are funded from the national exchequer for the benefits of a particular section of the society. (1.12)

On the basis of the above understanding of the tribes situation , the policy identifies its objectives is to strengthen the protective mechanism of the tribes, measures to improve the socio-economic and the human development index , along with the preservation of the privileges of the tribes besides preserving their cultural and traditional rights.(4.17) The strategies for achieving these objectives include reorientation of the institutional arrangements for the needs of the tribes, preparation of the tribes centric strategies and adapting the tribal sub plan along with the changing time. Besides strengthening the Integrated tribal development Programmes along with the introduction of the single line of administration, it also suggests for the support of the voluntary action and the research. (5.1)

Although the bill is an improvement over the first draft because it recognises the north east in the sense that it discusses about the sixth schedule, jhum and the customary laws , there are some criticism raised against the draft because it is unsuccessful in providing a more viable and alternative solution to the tribes problems. The draft should have given more attention to the north east states where the four states are having tribes' majority, besides substantial number of the tribes' population in the remaining states. In spite of indicating about the sixth schedule provisions, customary rights and the measure to prevent land alienation, but a careful analysis will reveal that in actual practice, the most of the solution provided were relevant to the fifth schedule areas only. It is because in the north east India, the community ownership is a norm, but land is acquired through the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act, which is based on the individual ownership. (Fernandes, Bharali and Kezo, 2008)

The major problem of the second draft is that it still recognises the need to assimilate the tribes to the 'mainstream' society by retaining their identity but it is a hierarchical concept which needs to criticise as there cannot be such mainstream and side stream society for the ethos of the plural society which recognises the rights of

the all communities. This idea of the assimilation has a major implication for the identity of the north east India. (ibid, 2008)

The policy also failed to understand the complexity of the problem of the land alienation as it reduces it to the problem of the alienation of the land from the tribes to the non-tribes only. But they failed take into consideration the problem of the land alienation that take place within the tribes itself. This leads to the absentee landlordism among some tribes. Actually the systems of the fifth and the sixth schedule have necessitated to sale off the land within the community itself through the means of sale and the mortgage. (Barbora, 2002; Fernandes, Bharali and Kezo, 2008)

Again in the question of the indebtedness of the tribes, the policy stopped at explaining the social causes behind the problem like the absence of education among the tribes. But, we need to see the aspect of infrastructure along with the giving access to the tribes to these infrastructures is essential besides improving the awareness of the community. The presence of the formal credit system within the ambit of the tribes' access is essential to have solution to the problem of indebtedness of the tribes. (ibid) Similar is the case with the health and the education where the draft by understanding the problems has only recommended the proper implementation of the infrastructure facilities in these areas. But along with the infrastructure, we need to look at the question of the access of the tribes to these infrastructures as the tribes are generally deprived of the access to the facilities even if the infrastructures are present. (Fernandes and Bharali, 2006)

3.8. Conclusion:

From the discussion of this chapter, it is clear that the tribal life and livelihood are closely associated with nature but they are dispossessed of natural resources because of lack of power. This can be better understood in the framework of political ecology which says that the people who have close relation with nature do not have the power to control them and thus they are easily deprived of them by the more powerful outsiders. It is true not only for the tribes relation with land and forest, even the nature of agriculture also present the changing nature of the relation of the tribes with nature and the process of marginalisation by dispossessing them of the resources too close to them, yet beyond control by the powerful groups including the capitalist and the state.

In the next chapter, we turn our attention to the tribes in Assam and try to highlight the issues of marginalisation therein.

Chapter 3

Tribes Development in Assam: Inherent Contradictions and Conflicts

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Tribal Development in Assam: Inherent Contradictions and Conflicts

This chapter attempts to understand the situation of tribes in the context of Assam. Here, we try to see the basic development parameters of the tribes from the various demographic data to assess the situation of the tribes in the state. In the second part of the chapter, there is an attempt to go beyond the basic development parameters to understand the effects of development policies on their life and the livelihood with the help of critical evaluation of the government approach as well as policies towards tribes. The basic aim is to see whether these approach and policies could satisfy the need of the specificity to deal with the tribes.

4.1. An Overview of Socio-Economic Situation of Tribes Assam:

4.1a. Demographic Situation of Tribes in Assam:

According to the 2001 census, there are 3,308,570 persons of the Scheduled tribes in Assam which constitutes 12.4% of the total population of 26,655,528. There are 23 (twenty three) notified schedule tribes in Assam and the growth rate of the S.T. population in the state during the decade of 1991-2001 was 15.1%.

There are some important features of the size and distribution of the S.T. population in Assam when we see their size and distribution.

While the Bodo is the largest group of the Scheduled tribes of Assam that constitute almost half (40.9 percent) of the total scheduled tribes population of the state, very small group like Pawi did not show any presence in 2001 census. Out of 23 notified scheduled tribes in Assam, nine groups i.e Bodo, Miri, Mikir, Rabha, Kachari, Lalung, Dimasa and Deori constitute about 90 percent of the total S. T. population of the state.

Table 4.1: Population of major STs in Assam, 2001 census

Sl no	Tribes	Population	Percentage to total ST population
1	All tribes	3,308,570	100
2	Bodo	1,352,771	40.9
3	Miri	587,310	17.8
4	Mikir	353,513	10.7
5	Rabha	277,517	8.4
6	Kachari	235,881	7.1
7	Lalung	170,622	5.2
8	Dimasa	110,976	3.4
9	Deori	41,161	1.2

Source: Registrar General of India

Secondly, majority of the schedule tribes population of Assam i.e 95.3% are rural. Dimasa has highest of the urban population of 10.4%. District wise distribution of the schedule tribes population also shows some interesting trend. While the North Cachar Hills and the Karbi Anglong having predominantly Dimasa and the Mikir (now Karbi) population, have highest number of the scheduled tribes population, but some district like Hailakandi, Karimganj and Cachar have negligible Scheduled tribes population. Again, North Cachar has highest of 68.3% of the S. T. Population in comparison to the total population of the district, followed by Karbi Anglong having 55.7% of the Scheduled tribes population.

4.1b. Sex Ratio:

The sex ratio as well as child sex ratio of (0-6) age group of Assam is below the nation average for the scheduled tribes population. While the overall sex ratio for

the S.T. in Assam is 972 in comparison to 977 of S.T. at all India level, it is 962 in case of child sex ratio of scheduled tribes population in comparison to the 973 for the same group at all India level. Among various groups in Assam, Lalung (985) has the highest sex ratio, while the Dimasa (951) has the lowest sex ratio. Similarly child sex ratio is lowest in case of Kachari (Sonowal) which is only 945.

4.1c. Education Status:

As per as 2001 census, the literacy rate of S.T. population in Assam is 62.5%, with the gender disparity of 19.9 percentage points., of which the male and female literacy rate is being 72.3% and 52.4% respectively. The S.T literacy rate of Assam is well above the national average for the S.T. population which is only 47.1%.

Among the tribes group, while the Kachari (Sonowal) shows the highest literacy rate of 81.4%; it is only 53.7% in case of Mikir. In terms of gender gap in the literacy level, Miri has recorded highest gender gap with 23.1 percentage points.

Table 4.2: Literacy rate of major STs in Assam

Sl no	Tribes	Total	Male	Female
1	All Scheduled Tribes	62.5	72.3	52.4
2	Dimasa	59.6	69.4	49.3
3	Mikir	53.7	64.1	43.0
4	Boro	61.3	71.4	51.1
5	Deori	76.2	84.8	67.5
6	Kachari	81.4	88.2	74.4
7	Lalung	61.8	72.0	51.6
8	Miri	60.1	71.4	48.3
9	Rabha	66.7	76.2	57.0

Source; Registrar General of India

From the above figures it is clear that the tribes fall far behind the non-tribes population in the overall literacy rate. There are differences among the tribes also, as some groups like Kachari have attained very high literacy rate which is more than national average.

In case of higher education of Graduation or above, the scheduled tribes has 2.3 % of its population attaining such a level. Among the major tribes, Deori has highest of 4.9 percent of population having graduation or above, while the groups like Mikir, Rabha and Lalung have very low percent of less than 2 percent of population attaining such a high education level.

4.1d. Work Participation Rate:

As per as 2001 census, 43.2% of the S.T. population are registered as workers among which 34.7% are marginal workers. An interesting feature of the tribes is that the work participation of the female is comparatively high of 35.8%, although it is lower in comparison to the males, which is 50.5 percent.

Again, among the major S.T. population of the state, Deori has the highest Work Participation rate of 55.5%, while it is lowest among the Dimasa, which is 38.9%.

Among the various scheduled tribes workers in Assam, 70.6 percent of the main workers are cultivators, while 6.1 percent are agricultural labourer. Among the major tribes groups, Miri has highest (85.6%) of their total main workers as cultivators, while the Rabha has highest (9%) percentage of the agricultural labourer of the total main workers. Thus, it can be inferred that majority of the S.T. of the Assam are not landless.

While the agriculture is the main occupation of the scheduled tribes of Assam, there are variations in the nature of cultivation. The people of the hills practice shifting cultivation in contrast to the people of the plain that do wet paddy cultivation along with vegetable with some minor variations. (Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 34) Among the tribes in Assam, Sericulture is an important cottage industry, while the handloom is the household industry. Manufacturing of cane and bamboo articles is also an important cottage industry among the tribes in Assam. (ibid, 34-35)

Thus, the dominance of the primary occupation is seen in case of tribes in Assam. It also signifies that the natural resources like land and forest play very important role in their life.

4.2. Categorisation of Tribes in Assam: Plain and Hill Tribes:

There are two categories of Scheduled Tribes population in Assam as per as amended constitution order of 1950 in 1976. (Pegu, 2009) As per as the amendment, the scheduled tribes who are indigenous of the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Autonomous Hill districts are accepted as scheduled tribes (hill), while , Indigenous tribes of the plain districts of Assam are recognised as Scheduled Tribes (plain). By this categorisation, Karbi, Kuki, Dimasa, Garo,Hajong, Mizo, Khasi, Jaintia, Hmars, Lokers, Powis, Man (Tai speaking), Chakma, Syntheng Panar, Syntheg, War, Bhoi, Lynggam and Naga tribes are recognised as Scheduled tribes (Hill), while the Bodo, Mishing, Rabha, Sonowal, Lalung (Tiwa), Deori, Thengal (Mech) , Hojai and Borman are categorised as Scheduled tribes (Plain). (ibid) On the basis of some further amendments, Singphos and Khamtis are recognised as Scheduled Tribes (Plain). While the Garo, Hajong and Dimasas are also recognised as Plain tribes. It is interesting to note that, Bodos living in the hill districts and the Karbis living in the plain districts are not recognised as scheduled tribes in the respective places. (ibid)

Thus, there are 9 scheduled tribes in the plain and 14 are recognised as scheduled tribes (Hills).

It is interesting to note that each tribe have distinct ethnic identity in terms of their customs, religion, language and way of life. Besides they are at different levels of socio-economic development with respect to various communities in Assam. These differences are visible among the different tribes residing in various parts of Assam. (Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 34) These differences mould the identity of tribes in Assam as the various inter group relation are the product of their identity itself.

There are major socio-economic differences among the tribes staying in hills and those in plains. It is to be noted that the problems of the tribes living in the hills is quite different from those of the plain. The constitutional provision of fifth and sixth schedule area in Assam is also coterminous with the categorisation of plain and hill tribes. Besides, the occupational patterns of the plain tribe are more close to the

peasant society with the pre dominance of wet rice cultivation. On the other hand, shifting cultivation and the use of forest constitute main part of the tribal occupation in the hill districts of Assam, although the situation is changing very rapidly. While discussing the differences of the hill dwelling and the valley dwelling tribes of the North East India, Goswami (1984) noted that economic problems of the valley-dwelling tribes is basically similar to the general Indian peasantry, as the long exposure to the national economy has made their society and political practices indifferent to the non-tribal peasant class., thus losing their indigeneity. Further, he noted that the introduction of the money economy, division of the labour on the basis of skill and social stratification on the basis of the private ownership of the property has been taking place in these societies. He further noted that the areas inhabited by the plain tribes are more impoverished economically due to their non insulation to the stronger national forces. (ibid, 57) It is because the economy of the tribes is characterised simple mode of production with the use of simple technology for resource use for their subsistence without much emphasis on the profit motive due to less importance of the cash economy. But the introduction of the economy of the dominant non tribes with the increasing contact brings dissonance in the economy of the tribes to their utter agony.

On the other hand, as Goswami observed, the situation is quite different in case of scheduled tribes dwelling in the hills. He said that they are yet to be integrated into the national economy, with some minor exceptions, because they had minimal contact with the national economy due to their difficult terrain of habitation and of various protective policy measures in the name of sixth schedule. He further noted that the attempts to extend the national economy to these areas in haste can be counterproductive as they may create social unrest as seen in case recent trends of the detribalisation among the various groups.(ibid, 57). Therefore we need to give emphasis on the specificity of the tribes while adopting any policy for their economy.

Hussain (1992) had divided the tribes in Assam into two groups: the Autochthon Tribes and the Non-Autochthon Tribes. While the first group is again divided into two distinct groups of plain and the hill tribes, the non-autochthon tribes are those groups of tribes who have migrated into the Assam as plantation labourer during the colonial period. They are not recognised as scheduled tribes in Assam despite their Scheduled tribes position in their place of origin in the Jharkhand area.

(ibid, 1047) It is interesting to note that the non autochthon tribes in Assam are studied as a separate category, mainly because of their separate industrial set up of their location. But, they have a mass impact not only in the society and the politics of Assam but also in the identity of tribes itself in the state. (ibid)

Apart from the commonality of the situation of tribes as a group, there are vast internal differences among various groups of tribes as well. The tribes have variation in their habitat, number, literacy rate etc. These differences play an important role not only in their socio-economic development, but also their identity towards other tribes and non tribes groups.

Thus, the process of feeling of deprivation of the various tribes is not only against the non-tribes but against the relatively developed tribes as well. Thus the process of identity formation of tribes in Assam is a complex one that has major implication for shaping the broader socio-political scenario of the region.

4.3. Socio-Economic and Political Situation of Tribes in Assam with Respect to Forest and Land:

The process of identifying a tribe with particular region is common scene in north east India albeit with many controversy. The process of fission and fusion of the communities in the region is greatly shaped by the land and forest laws in the region along with the historical relation of the various communities including tribes with these resources. The socio-political history of the region shows that the specificity of the history of communities in Assam along with the structural situation arises as a result of approach to tribes in whole India shapes the situation of tribes in Assam. Here, we need to give emphasis on the geo-political history of the region in terms of large scale migration and the complexity of the ethnic assertions of various communities. The nature of changes that are introduced in the society that affect the relation of the tribes with forest and land and ultimately the condition of the tribes itself have to be considered.

4.3a. Question of Land and its Relation with Tribes in Assam:

Land plays an important role in the study of tribes in Assam. The nature of the close relation that the tribes have with the land can also be seen with respect to the high dependence of the tribes' workforce on the primary sector. It was found that in

1991, 83.3% of the tribal workforce of the North East India is engaged in the primary sector. (Dubey and Gangopadhyay, 1998; as quoted by Fernandes et al, 2008, 13) The situation is not different in case of Assam. Communal mode of ownership of property of tribes was also the case with the tribes in Assam.

The process of land alienation is associated with the changing ownership pattern whereby the traditional users of the land are deprived of the resource considering the laws, mostly framed by the modern states. Shimray, (2006) traced the origin of the problem of the tribes land to the changing landownership pattern under the aegis of the laws of the colonial administration. She said that, traditional three tier system of the land ownership of the tribes based on their customary laws gave every community a well defined boundary. The three tier land ownership and the control system have: community land, individual land and the clan land mainly controlled by the village council. (ibid, 11) But the changing pattern of the land laws both because of the internal dynamisms and the external forces substantially changed the situation. (ibid, 11) The change in the ownership pattern of land effects tribes as the shift from communal to individual ownership is not a simple one as it creates new pattern of ownership and class formation of the tribes.

There are three main processes that led to land alienation of tribes in Assam. They are:

1. Alienation in the process of migration;
2. Land alienation because of the developmental projects;
3. Changing nature of the economy.

Although there is variation in the nature and intensity of the affect of these processes on various tribes, but they have major role in the land alienation of the region inhabited by tribes in Assam.

4.3a(i). Alienation in the Process of Migration:

The process of land alienation in Assam due to migration of people from outside started since colonial time. The process of land alienation is closely associated with the creation of the 'tribal belts' and the 'blocks' in Assam. (Report, AIRTSc,

1999) It was found that the large scale immigration of the people from the East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) started before 1911 creating a situation of conflict in the region (ibid). Various censuses since 1921 have pointed out this fact. Writing about this problem on the basis of census report of 1921, Lioyd noted:

“In 1911, few cultivators from Eastern Bengal had gone to Goalpara. In the last decade (1911-1921) the movement has extended far up the valley, and the colonists now form an appreciable element of population in all the four lower and the central districts. In Goalpara nearly 20% of the population is made up of these settlers. The next favourite district is Nagaon where they form about 14% of the whole population. In Kamrup waste lands are being taken up rapidly, especially in Barpeta sub-division. In Darrang exploration and the settlement by the colonists are in an earlier stage. They have not penetrated far from the banks of the Brahmaputra. Almost every train and the steamer bring parties of these settlers and it seems likely that their march will extend further up the Brahmaputra valley from the river before long.” (As quoted in Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 2)

The census report of the 1931 revealed the increasing trend of the Bengali immigrants from the Mymensingh area of the Bangladesh. In the Goalpara district the number of the Mymensingh immigrants was 80,000 which constitute 47 percentage of the total 1, 70,000 Bengali speaking population of the district. In Kamrup district, out of the total 1, 34,000 Bengali speaking populations, immigrant population was 91,000 constituting 69 percent. The situation of the Darrang district is far worse where out of 41,000 Bengali speaking population, Mymonsingh immigrants has as high as 30,000, constituting 75 percent. The worst situation is of course in Nagaon district where the percentage of the immigrant population in comparison to the Bengali speaking population is 90 percent, being 1,08,000 of total 1,20,000 Bengali speaking population. The situation was quite normal in the Sibsagar and the Lakhimpur district as per as 1931 census, when there were no Mymonsingh immigrants were found in the Sibsagar district, whereas the number is only 2000 in case of Lakhimpur district. (Report, AIRTSc, 1999) While discussing about the worse situation in these districts, Mr C.S. Mullan remarked how the lower districts of Assam have become the colonies of the Mymensingh immigrants and how they come in group to capture any piece of wasteland available. He said; “Those are startling figures and illustrate the wonderful rapidity with which the lower districts are becoming colonies of

Mymensingh....wheresoever's the carcass, there will be vultures gathered together. Where there is wasteland, thither flock the Mymensinghis." (As quoted in Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 4)

Thus, the large scale immigration of the people from East Pakistan was common phenomena in the pre-independence period. The process continue in the eve of independence and latter at the time of creation of Bangladesh leading to substantial increase in the number of the immigrant population. The estimate of exact number of the immigrant is a matter of debate in this context due to unavailability of proper data. When they settle down in various uninhabited areas which are mainly forest land or communal land use by the tribes or other communities for earning their livelihood, it creates tension with the communities of people affected in the process.

Immigration of the Tea Garden Labourer:

There was another stream of influx of tea garden labourer from the present day Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and the other areas. Guha (1975) said that the immigration of the indentured labour form the Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and other regions to the tea industry in the northeast is due to the large scale displacement of the people from the former regions as a result of the Permanent settlement of 1993 and the Zamindari system.(Guha, 1975, 17-18) Besides, Assam Land Rules For Special Cultivation 1838 paved the way for the Ahom, Bodo-Kachari, Koch and the other to lose land for the tea gardens.(Borbora,1998) But the migration of the tea garden labourer to Assam was started by the colonial government in the 19th century and continue till 1960.(Baruah,1999)

These people were recruited for the tea plantation for a certain period of contract and once the contract is finished they generally settled down near the Assamese villages forming their own village in the agricultural land. As the tea plantation have large scale seasonal demand for the labourer, so even the tea industry supported such settlement. (ibid, 1999)

Although, there is only estimate of the tea garden labourer due to technical difficulty in their identification on the basis of census report, but the census estimates shows the presence of a large section of the migrant tea garden labourer in Assam. While the census estimate of 1921 census estimated the population of the tea garden

labourer and their descendent to be 1.3 million, which is almost one-sixth of the total population of the state (Baruah, 1999), it rose to 3.4 million in 1981(*ibid*, 54)

Marwaris and Nepali Migrant:

Marwaris and the Nepalis constitute an important section of the immigrant population in Assam affecting the socio-economic history of the state since nineteenth century. Although the Marwaris is a trading class from Rajasthan, but in Assam the term is used loosely to include some other trading groups such as Sindhis. (Baruah, 1999, 60)

The migration of the Marwari community into Assam have major role in the transition of the Assam's economy from the non monetised to market economy in the nineteenth century. (*ibid*, 61) They dominated the trade in Assam throughout the valley creating some conflicts in interest with the local people. But they do not constitute numerical majority and their association with trading did not require much land for their settlement. Besides, most of the people from these communities do not stay in Assam permanently.

Nepali immigrants constitute a distinct group of immigrant to Assam who have enjoyed some rights in India to engage in economic occupations, to settle down and to own property on the basis of treaties between Nepal and India. This resulted in large amount of legal rights for the Nepali immigrants. (Baruah, 1999) Nepali immigrant constitute vast majority of the 'professional' cattle grazers as well as 'non professional' cattle grazers. (Guha, 1977) 'Non Professional' cattle grazers had performed the grazing occupation along with the agriculture and the law allowed the tax exemption for them. The huge increasing population of the Nepali immigrant increased the revenue of the government from an insignificant source to 'an expanding source'. According to 1991 census, there were 4, 33,000 Nepali speaker in Assam which constitute 1.9 percent of the total population of the state. But there are large number of Assamese speaking Nepali also meaning that actual amount of the Nepali population will be much larger. (Baruah, 1999)

One interesting aspect of the policy towards the Nepali population is that they were taken as cattle grazers and as protected group along with the scheduled tribes in the 'tribal blocks' in Assam. (*Ibid*, 62) Thus, inspite of an immigrant community,

Nepali had some state protection. Besides, they did not create much conflict in Assam, except during the time of Assam movement or periodic small scale violence afterwards.

Apart from these groups, there are sections of the people from Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, who worked mainly as rickshaw puller or in other manual works. They generally do not stay permanently in Assam. There are some traders from Punjab and Uttar Pradesh also who worked along with the Marwari traders.

4.1a(ii) Immigration and the Conflict over the Land:

Immigration has various socio-political and economic impacts on the life of the people who are migrated as well as those who are local residents. The large scale immigration of people into, both from the Mymensingh area of Bangladesh and the central India had far reaching implications on the land ownership patterns and the control patterns of the tribal lands. But the nature of the changes due to such immigration varies with the immigrant people and the nature of their socio-economic system.

In case of Mymensingh immigrants from the eastern Bangladesh, they first occupied the char areas, which are unoccupied because of the inaccessibility of the areas. But when they finished such land, they move to government's reserves that are mainly occupied by the tribes or nearby areas, thereby pushing the latter further into the sub-montane regions as the tribes found the immigrants ethnically, religiously and linguistically different from them thereby requiring abandoning their own villages. Sometimes, the immigrants also forced the tribes to move up thereby creating a condition of friction with them. It is to be noted frictions besides creating some law and order problem, also created problem in the revenue administration of the British India (Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 4-5). The immigrants generally occupy the vacant lands which are declared by the government as waste land and as a result they did not yield any revenue for the government (ibid).

Another cause of tension is the separate histories of the immigrants and the local people. (Fernandez, Bharali and Kezo; 2008) It is because; the immigrants prosper by growing three crops with the help of the advanced cultivation techniques. But the local history of cultivation created a situation of single crop farming by the

local people. Even the jhum is also based on the single crop cultivation, thereby making the local people less prosperous than that of the immigrants and created the scope for tension. (ibid; 2008; 18-19) They further stated that the conflicts in such a situation will result in the attempt from the local people to defend their livelihood by protecting against the immigrants and when the situation became worse, there is a competition among themselves for the resources. (ibid, 19)

Sharma (2001) argued that the large scale immigration of the people from East Bengal causes land alienation by displacing the tribes in two ways: the first form is the direct usurpation of the tribes land by the immigrants and in the second method, the immigrants acquire the land by indirect method as the tribes in the process of shifting cultivation move to faraway places by leaving behind the land making it available for the immigrants. (Raychoudhury, 1991, 23; Sharma, 2001, 4793)

But the question is quite different in case of tea garden labourer from the central India. In fact, the very nature of the immigration has changed with the introduction of the colonial policies. The policy of the garden management to keep the indentured labour isolated created a situation where the local people treat them as non indigenous. It resulted in the non integration of the labourers to the surroundings, which affected their identity and cultural differences. (Fernandes, Borbora and Bharali, 2003, 5-6) Besides, there is disjuncture in the perception of the British, Tea garden labourer and the Tribes about the nature of the land which creates conflicts. In this context, Roy (1995) noted that the isolated existence of the tea garden labourer made the tribes to feel them as outsiders developing tea gardens in their lands. Besides, he noted, the establishment of villages by the British on lands that that are seen as state property, which are perceived as source of livelihood by the tribes.(ibid, 1995)

4.1a(iii). Policies and Laws for Stopping the Land Alienations:

Line System:

Line system was a device to tackle the problem of unauthorised occupation of land, first in the Nowgong District and the BARPETA sub-division of the Kamrup district in 1920, by drawing a line on the village map considering that the inhabitants of the village and the immigrants were not allowed to occupy land beyond that line. The

system, which was later gradually extended to other districts of the lower Assam, divided the villages as: 'open villages', 'closed villages' and 'mixed villages'. While the immigrants were allowed to settle freely in the 'open villages', they were not allowed to settle in the 'closed villages' in any circumstances, and they could settle in one side of the line in case of the 'mixed villages'.

But the line system was not able to meet the intension of the British to solve the problem of the unauthorised occupation of the land. "The line system devised by the British administrators with so much good intentions could not, however, solve the problems of unauthorised occupation and encroachment of the land by the immigrants. Even the closed villages were found to have been encroached." (Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 6)

It was found that the aggressive land grabbing initiative of the immigrants lead to the collapse of the line system. The situation became so worse that many of the tribes villages disappeared due to the land alienation to immigrants and the tribes were forced to move to the sub montane zone. (Das, 1986, 31; Sharma, 2001, 4793)

As the Line system could not satisfy its goals, a committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Mr F. W. Hockenull, known as Line System Committee, to review the working of the line system. The committee found that the tribes were the worst victims of the unregulated encroachment of the land by the migrants from the Mymensingh area, and it leads to the disappearance of the many villages of tribes, apart from pushing many of them to move into the sub montane regions. The committee recommended the protection of the larger area of Mauza (Group of villages) or the Block of Mauza from the encroachment of the immigrants, rather than the villages.

After this, government of Assam in 1939, headed by Late Gopinath Bordoloi adopted a resolution on the Committee on the line system; this resolution was seen as the precursor to the formation of the tribal belts and the blocks. Paragraph 4 of the resolution noted:

"A. The restrictions constituting the so-called Line-System which have been in existence in the province for over 10 years past were primarily intended against the unending flow of Bengal immigrant cultivators and took the form of constituting

certain areas in which settlement of lands with such immigrants was prohibited, government agree with the committee that the unit for such restriction or prohibition should, where possible, be larger. They consider that in the sub-montane areas it should be possible to constitute whole Mauzas or compact parts of the Mauzas inhabited predominantly by Backward and tribes classes into 'prohibited areas'. Elsewhere where the whole village or a larger compact area is predominantly peopled by backward or tribal classes, such village or areas may be constituted prohibited areas. Within the prohibited areas as constituted, immigrant cultivators shall not be allowed land either by settlement or by transfer of annual pattas, and any immigrant as taking up land o by squatting shall be evicted." (As quoted in Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 7)

But the resolution could not be materialise by the Bordoloi government as it had to resign on the eve of the Quit India Movement. (ibid)

In this context, it is very interesting to see the role of British government in the settlement of the immigrants. It is interesting to note that the Britishers adopted dual policy for the immigrants. On the one hand, it allowed the Bengali immigrants to settle in the waste and the fallow land with the sole objectives of revenue earning but on the other hand it did not allow the non tribes to move to the tribes areas by creating tribes belts and blocks. This is more seen as their effort to stop the spreading of the ideas of freedom movement. (Sharma, 2001, 4794)

Policy of Sir Saadulla ministry:

When the coalition ministry headed by Sir Saadulla came to power in March 1945, it started a completely new policy of land settlement by superseding all the previous resolutions. The four objectives of the policy statements are aimed at the benefit of the landless immigrant as well as the tribes. The main objective of this policy was planned settlement of waste land. (Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 9) It also had the objective of recognition of landless immigrants from other provinces who came to Assam before 1st January 1938 as being equally entitled with landless indigenous persons to waste-land settlement. Besides it wanted the protection of tribal classes in areas predominantly occupied by them against aggressive element which are apt to endanger the normal economic and the social basis of village life and maintenance of grassing and other reserves by evicting encroachers. (ibid)

According to the provision 3 of the above policy statement, it was decided that information will be collected regarding the villages where the percentage of tribal classes exceeds 50 percent and of the villages occupied by the tribes and the others, along with statistics of the area of cultivable waste. Further, it was planned that these villages will be marked on the map and on the completion of the enquiry; it was decided to notify the tribal belt or Blocks in the sub – montane areas. It was further decided that, within the notified area, a reservation will be made which will not be less than areas occupied by the tribal people plus the stipulated reservation for general future expansion will be made for safeguarding the tribes and other present in the region and with no further settlement with the others. (ibid, 9) It was also decided to make the provision for the creation of the tribal blocks in the planned settlement area where the tribes have villages and homes, in side by side with the other communities. (ibid, 9-10) But these special provisions aimed at protecting the interest of the tribes over land failed to satisfy its objectives because of the forceful encroachment of the immigrants which was essential to meet the resources for large scale migration.

4.1a(iv). Provision of the Tribal Belts and Blocks;

The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886:

The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 formed the foundation of the land and revenue arrangement of the state. It was amended in 1947 in pursuance of the Resolution of the Provincial Government of 1939, headed by Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi. It added a chapter (chapter x) that aimed at “protecting those classes who on account of their primitive condition and lack of education or material advantages are incapable of looking after their welfare in so far as much welfare depends upon their having sufficient land for their maintenance.” (Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 11) The constitution of the tribal belts and blocks under this amendment was solely aimed on this aspect.

The section 160(1) of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Amendment Act of 1947 made the provision of the constitution of the compact areas in regions predominantly occupied by the classes of people notified under the section 160(2) of the above act into Belts and Blocks. Here, Blocks have smaller area in comparison to the boundaries of the Mauza, while the Belts have larger area. Although, Assam land and Revenue Regulation Act of 1947 refereed the identified areas as only ‘Belts’ and

'Blocks', but they were later came to be known as 'Tribal Belts and Blocks' because they are created primarily to safeguard the interest of the tribes on land. (ibid) Section 160(2) of this Act identified following class of the people whom it considered for the entitlement of the protection: Plain Tribes, Hill Tribes, Tea-Garden Tribes, Santhals, Nepali cultivators Graziers, and Scheduled caste.

On the basis of the above act, 35 Belts and Blocks; consisting of 11 Belts and 24 Blocks; were created in Assam up to 1964. (Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 11)

According to the provision of the constitution of the 'tribal belts and blocks', 'no person shall acquire or possess by transfer, exchange, lease, agreement or settlement any land in any areas constituted into belts and blocks in contravention of the provision of the Act' (ibid, 17) It implied that transfer, exchange, lease can take place only among the people belonging to the protected classes like plain tribes, hill tribes, tea garden tribes etc. It is interesting to note that such provisions are not applicable for any transfer through mortgage in case of nationalised bank or registered co-operative society or any such financial institutions or as approved by the state government. (ibid) It gave right to the state government for the acquisition of large amount of lands in the areas considered as tribal blocks or belts for their benefits. Thus, tribal belts or blocks could not satisfy the rights of the 'so called protected classes' in the law.

4.1a(v). Provision of the Sixth Schedule Area:

The Sixth Schedule is applicable in the Karbi Anglong and the North Cacher District based on different laws on the basis of the article 244 of the constitution. It provides District Autonomous Council for these districts with an aim to give separate protective measures and legislative, administrative and judiciary powers.

The Mikir Hills (Land and Revenue) Act 1953 was passed by the Karbi Anglong District Council under the provision of the sixth schedule of the constitution giving the District Council Authority the rights over land, settlement and assessment of land and other related matters.

The Mikir Hills District (Transfer of Land) Act, 1959 said that no land under the Jurisdiction of the District Council Authority shall be sold, mortgaged, leased, bartered , gifted or otherwise transferred to a non-tribes or by one non-tribes to

another except with the previous permission of the Executive Committee of the District Council.

The criticism raised against the Act was that it provides only monetary penalty for intentionally disobeying an order of requisition to vacate lands occupied illegally. (Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 25)

Although the formal land alienation in the Karbi Anglong District is very less due to the provision of the District council under the sixth schedule, but in the plain areas of the district, especially in the area of Howraghat Development Block, the incidence of the temporary land alienation from the Karbis to the East Bengal Refugees is seen by the various informal methods like Paikas System, Sukti Bandhok, Khoi Bandhak and Mena. (Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 26-30)

In the Paikas System, the tribes give their land to other person especially non tribal immigrants for one or two year against some cash payment. The tribes generally get cash after selling one-fifth of the produce. Although, the ownership rights are still with the tribes but they can do nothing and once entered into the system, they have to continue in it mainly because of the pitiable economic conditions. As a result, the condition of the landowner is generally worse than the cultivator. (Bordoloi, 1986, 137-138)

On the other hand, in the system of Sukti bandhak, the land is given to the non tribes on a mortgage for one year against the payment of paddy to the landowner at certain amount. The system is renewable and as such once entered into it, it is very hard for the tribes to come out of it. Besides, the tribes do not possess any right over land during the period of mortgage, making their situation worse. (ibid, 138)

The Khoi bandhok system is similar to the Sukti bandhok except that the contract of mortgage is for minimum 5 years and the payment in this system has to be made in the form of money annually which is fixed once at the beginning.

In the system called Mena, the unreclaimed land suitable for cultivation available in the possession of the tribes are given to non tribes for reclamation and cultivation for 3 to 5 years. In return, the tribes get nothing but the reclaimed piece of land.

Thus, there are various informal methods which deprive the tribes of the land resources, inspite of their ownership rights and various protective measures against land alienation. The laws are not strict enough to stop these informal methods of land transfer. Besides, the poor economic conditions of the tribes forced them to enter into such systems.

The North Cachar Hill District Council:

Although, there are suitable laws in the Karbi Anglong District for the transfer of land and settlement, no law prohibiting the transfer of land from tribes to non tribes exist in the North Cachar Hills except some executive instructions provided on 6th July 1962. In spite of this, the conditions of land alienation is less in the district because of low percentage of non tribes in the district as well as the low density of population. The executive order regarding the periodic lease in the district states that tribal land holder cannot transfer his land to the non tribes without the prior permission of the District Council Authority. The district council take the decision after considering whether the person to whom the land is going to be transferred is a permanent resident of the district or not, and if he is a permanent resident then whether he has enough possession of land with him. (Report, AIRTSc, 1999)

Besides, the land settlement policy in the government lands in the district also looks into the issue of giving due preference to the local tribes. The Land Settlement Policy Resolution of 1954 stated that while settling the people in the government land, first importance will be given to local tribes. The second preference will be given to the non tribes who are permanent resident of the district and are elector of the District Council Authorities. It also stated that a tribal from the same community but from the other village can be allowed to settle provided that local villagers do not oppose it and the new settler have the capability for cultivation. (ibid)

Thus the land settlement policies are technically preferable for the tribes of the district. But their real result will be visible only when there will be increase in the population of non tribes as well as tribes in the district and the land resources will not be enough to meet the demands of the non-tribes.

4.3b. Post colonial Development Policy and Displacement of the Tribes in Assam:

There are many developments projects started in the Assam both by the union government and the state government to bring economic development of the region. It is to be noted that such developments projects are aimed to bring economic growth of the region. But it is essential to see the overall impact of these projects on the life of the people on the micro level. There are many development projects taken for the state of Assam in post independence period. “In 2003 Assam had 7 major irrigation dams, 2 of them completed and 5 ongoing and 14 medium irrigation dams, 11 completed and 3 ongoing. Another major dam and 6 more medium dams are proposed....in 2000 the state also had 2,107 minor irrigation projects (MIP) in its plains districts, 879 of them completed and the remaining 1,228 under construction.”

“Assam also has 21 major industries and 97 medium industries....in 1996-97 the state had 2,435.13 km of railway lines. By 2002-03 its length had to gone upto 2,517.23 km. Some of the lines were prior to 1947. It also had 2,044 km of national highways, 2,028 km of state highways and 30,351km of other PWD roads. Assam also has 5 universities , 390 Arts , science colleges , 37 professional colleges , 604 higher secondary schools , 4,136 high schools , 8, 019 middle schools, 33, 236 primary schools and 199 pre-primary schools, most of them built after 1947.” (Fernandes and Bharali, 2011, 80-81) Besides these projects which acquire a large amount of land, there are also use of lands for the purpose of building defence cantonment and other outpost; projects for district administration, fisheries, farms and others ; and for building the refugee rehabilitation centre or the other.(ibid, 81)

It is to be noted that a total of 14 lakh acres of lands acquired for these project during 1947-2000, although the official statistics present it as 3.9 lakh acres, thereby neglecting more than 10 lakh acres. (Fernandes and Bharali, 2011, 81) It is found that most of the lands are Common Property Resource (CPR) on which the tribes and the other communities depend for their livelihood. Fernandes and Bharali (2011) have calculated the percentage of CPR to the total land acquired is 55.65%. Another important dimension of the acquisition of these CPR is that the communities who are dependent on them for the livelihood do not get the compensation due to technical problem in showing the individual legal ownership.

4.3b(i). Impoverishment and the Marginalisation of Tribes in the Process of Displacement:

While studying the displacement, it is essential to study the process of the impoverishment and the marginalisation that can take place in the process. The process of displacement from the land, forest or the agricultural land that take place because of the development projects bring changes in pattern of land holding and the occupation of other resources. When the tribes are deprived from the means of livelihood in the process of displacement, it also led to the introduction of tribes in a new economy and society which is virtually new from the traditional one. The tribes are associated with the land and forest resources in informal manner where the means of ownership is communal thus having no legal individual ownership, and thus they are forced to leave their economy to go for a formal economy to which they are not traditionally associated. In this context, giving the cash compensation for the loss of the forest on which they are dependent for fruits, flowers, medicines and the other benefits will not work for them. Thus, impoverishment means the loss of livelihood of the tribes because of the displacement which is more pathetic than becoming poor. (Fernandes and Bharali, 2011) Therefore, 'impoverishment is the process of change in people's economic status after the loss of their source of food, work and sustenance. (ibid, 12) The tribes are impoverished in the sense that they do not have control over their own means of livelihood anymore.

The nature of the impoverishment is dependent on the socio-economic condition of the people before the displacement. There are some people who use to say that the economic conditions of the project affected people improved after their displacement as they get more monetary income by the means of the rehabilitation after displacement. (Kar, 1991) But in actual situation some of dominant class of the Project affected persons may improve their situation due to the monetary compensation, but the situation is worse in case of the subalterns who are associated with the informal economy. (Fernandes and Raj, 1992) It is because, when they are displaced and deprived of the land and the other forest resources, they have to spend large amount of the monetary compensation in the construction of the house or to meet the other primary needs. Most important thing is that they have to spend lot of money in the getting food or other basic necessities which were earlier available from

the community resources, of which they are now deprived. (Fernandes and Bharali, 2011)

The process of marginalisation goes beyond the loss of livelihood in the process of impoverishment because the marginalisation involves the deterioration of their social and cultural status. They are marginalised because along with their alienation, there is a disruption of their traditional lifestyle, social system and the cultural practices. In the process, their traditional identity attached to the land gets disrupted. (ibid)) This is also a psychological process because the displaced and the project affected people who are basically associated with the informal economy, have low self image. As they are not prepared to come to the formal economy and the society, it creates disruption in their life. (ibid)

Thus the process of marginalisation of tribes in the process of their displacement from the land involves loss of people's social and psychological base apart from the economic security, which leads to their marginalisation. The situation of marginalisation arises in case of tribes due to the less interest from the policy makers to incorporate the specific socio-cultural conditions of the tribes while formulating any development projects or rehabilitation policies.

4.3b(ii). Rehabilitation Policy in Assam:

The displacement of the people by various projects creating large scale displacement in Assam, but the worst part of the story is that Assam does not have a specific Rehabilitation Policy for the persons displaced or affected by the projects. As a result, although the private owners of the land are given a compensation package, but they are never been rehabilitated, except in few cases. The situations are worse for the people, mostly tribes, dependent on the CPRs. As they do not have any legal documents over the ownership of CPRs, they do not even get the compensation. Thus, the dispossession of the tribes of their livelihood without compensation leads to their marginalisation. (Fernandes and Bharali, 2011, 83)

Thus, it is seen that there is there is similarity in the situation of tribes in Assam with that of the situation of tribes at the national level. It is not only in the low level of development as indicated by the basic indicators of development in demographic data, but the nature of policies to tribal development also have an all

India orientation. As a result, it is obvious that tribes are dispossessed of their life and livelihood because of they are not able give any consideration to the specificity of the tribes as well as of history of Assam.

4.3c. Changing Nature of the Economy:

The changes brought about to the economy of the tribes of Assam over the period of time brought about drastic changes in their society and culture. The society of tribes has undergone rapid changes under the impact of new economic and administrative policies of the British government. The introduction of the new revenue policy in a society where introduction of the cash economy has not take place in a big manner created disarray to the life of both tribes and the non tribal people.

In the Ahom period, there was a system of giving labour to the king in return of the land by the adult member of the family and thus no system of cash economy. Besides, tribes continued to use their traditional occupation like hunting, food gathering, shifting cultivation , terrace cultivation, animal husbandry etc along with the settled cultivation thereby making them extremely dependent on the forest resources. Besides, communal ownership of land was important characteristics of such society. (Sharma, 2001, 4792-4793) Various tribal groups were also allowed to maintain their own territory in return of some feudal obligation to the ruling classes. (ibid)

British administration brought a new system of revenue administration where the people had to pay revenue for their land thereby starting a new process of indebtedness. As there is very less importance of cash economy in the tribal areas, they have to take debt to pay their revenue. There is also the commercialisation of land whereby it became saleable. Both these two processes created the situation where the tribes have to sale the land if they could not repay money or land revenue, not only to the outsiders but also to the elite sections of the same group. Thus is started the process of land alienation along with the formation of new class system. (ibid) There emerged a new class of people among the tribe itself along with the dominant group from outside the tribe who exploit the economically weaker classes of tribes in the changing economy. (ibid)

The practice of shifting cultivation is another issue in Assam. Although this practice helped the tribes to avoid the payment of land revenue, (Barman, 1995, 75) because such cultivation is done in the communal land not categorised for revenue purposes but it also deprived them of the individual ownership of land by the means of 'patta'. (Sharma, 2001) Such conditions make it easy to disposes tribes of their land as they do not have the formal ownership over it.

Another issue is that, there is strong criticism raised against the shifting cultivation by the policy makers saying that it leads to large scale environmental destruction by the means of soil erosion and deforestation. Besides, the cultivation was criticised for having low productivity. Considering these issues, there is a strong initiative from the state to change the pattern of cultivation to terrace or permanent mode. But this change is also associated with the change in the nature of mode of ownership of land from communal ownership to individual ownership. It resulted in the commercialisation of the land, which was already started with the new system of revenue administration of the British government. As a result, new forms of class formation take place among the tribes on the basis of the ownership of the land. Besides, the land became saleable, which made a group of tribes landless as they have to sale off their land to meet their monetary requirement, which lead to the emergence of a class of landless labourer in the tribal society. Thus, the nature of changes associated with the shifting cultivation has not only changed the social organisation pattern over the land, but it changed the class structure of the tribes itself. Besides, it opened the scope for a class of tribes people for the dispossession from their land and hence marginalisation. (Karna, 1999; Sharma, 2001)

Another issue is that, when there is shift from the shifting cultivation to the settled cultivation under the initiative of the state, the socio-cultural organisations of the people do not support it. As the permanent cultivation require a large amount monetary investment in comparison to the settled cultivation, the people have to sell off a part of their land. But the protective policy for the lands of tribes prohibits the selling of the land to the non-tribes outsiders. As a result, various informal methods of land transfer emerged by which the land is transferred to the non-tribal immigrants, (Baruah, 2005) who in spite of non-possession of the ownership rights over the land, using the land continuously for years and hence in a much better position than the tribal land owner. In some cases they have to sale the land at throwaway prices to the

tribes because they could not sale them to the non-tribes. Thus, the protective policy itself cannot meet the interest of the tribes.

4.4. Forest and the Tribes in Assam:

Forest constitutes an important component of the life and livelihood of the tribes in Assam as like the tribes in other parts of India. The relation of the tribes with the forest is not only for their economic interest, but is associated with their socio-cultural processes also. The discussion of the forest situation in Assam can be seen on the broader framework of forest and tribes in North east India. While discussing situation in case of economy of the hill areas of North East India, Karna (1999) noted that the discussion of the forest issue in the context of North-East India is very complex which require to take into consideration the both the issue of ecology as well as people's right. Thus, it is essential to consider the rights of the tribes who are using the forest resources continuously for ages while considering the question of the ecology conservation. (ibid) It implies that the use of forest through ages gives the tribes a natural right over it, which may not be recognised legally. The association of the tribes with forest need to understand in terms of their livelihood right. So we have to go beyond legal rights to understand the issues of forest ownership rights of the tribes.

The relation of tribes with forest in Assam can be seen in terms of their use of forest resources directly or through the indirect means of using it for agriculture. The jhum (shifting) cultivation in Assam is an important issue of consideration for the use of forest in because the cultivation is done in the hilly areas having the large tract of forest. Jhum constitute most important form of cultivation in the hill areas of the north-east areas including the two hill district of Assam.

Another important issue of the forest policy in the post independence India in north east is that in the name of forest policy, there is demand for keeping at least one third of the area under the forest. But, the low level of forest in the plain area forced the people of the hills to sacrifice their livelihood as they are not supposed to destroy the forest for cultivation. (Xaxa, 1993)

4.4a. Assam Forest Policy, 2004:

Like the other states of the North East India, Assam also had the problem of deforestation which necessitates the state government to adopt a comprehensive forest policy to safeguard the forest. Assam Forest Policy came into effect in 2004 with this basic aim. Thus the question of the need of the forest policy itself did not arise with due consideration to the intimate relation of the tribes or other communities with the forest, but on the issue of forest destruction that open the scope for marginalisation of the rights of the tribes in the name of the forest conservation.

The Assam Forest Policy of 2004 had the following objectives: to restore the ecological balance that has resulted in the deterioration of the forest; to conserve Assam's natural heritage by preserving its natural forests and wetlands with a variety of flora and fauna that represent its unique biodiversity and genetic resources, to enhance the quality of the forest cover in its denuded and degraded land through people's involvement and a symbiosis of traditional knowledge and modern technology, to create a massive people's movement with special involvement of the woman to achieve the objectives and minimise the pressure on forests under a community based programme, and to understand the forest dynamics and encouraging the researchers from the region to undertake quality research on forest conservation and its suitable use. Its principle aim is to ensure progressive sustainable development of the forests of Assam to meet the twin objectives of environmental stability and ecological balance together with improved livelihood support system for her people." (Fernandes, Bharali and Kezo, 2008, 91-92)

From the policy, it can be inferred that, it assumed a symbiotic relation between the tribes and the forest. (ibid) It also stated that forest are vulnerable to tribes due to their low literacy and poor economic conditions that made them feel alienated and exploited once their land is encroached. (ibid) The specificity of vulnerability of the forest dwelling tribes is the major cause of their marginalisation. To reduce marginalisation, the Bill emphasised the need to incorporate the tribes in the protection, management and regeneration of the forest. (ibid) It means that the tribes have to be partners in the process rather than making them only silent beneficiary and this can help to rectify the loopholes that may arise either at the policy level or at the ground level due to their mutual non-compatibility. Although, there is

some emphasis on making tribes partners in forest conservation in the Bill, in actual situation it failed to materialise at the operational level because the ultimate aim of the policy was forest conservation, not the conservation of tribes.

There are some other criticisms raised against this policy. The policy had greater emphasis on the forest and biodiversity conservation and thereby it neglects the rights of the traditional dwellers on the forest. Again, it sees the encroachment as the major cause of deforestation, thereby making the forest dwellers the main agent of destroying forest which negates century long dedication of the forest dwellers to conserve forest. It created the scene for conflict between forest department and the local people. (ibid, 92) By treating the forest dwellers as the destroyer and encroacher of the forest, it advocated a repressive policy for the forest conservation like giving the firearms and military training to the forest guard. (The Sentinal, 2006; as referred in Fernandes, Bharali and Kezo, 2008, 92) This goes against the rights of the forest dwellers over the natural resources. Besides, it goes negating the symbiotic relation between the forest dwellers and the forest that the forest policy itself stated.

Another important issue is that the commercial interest of the state in terms of the commercial exploitation of the forest gets priority without taking into consideration the importance of the tribes in the natural resource management. The genuine Joint Forest Management (JFM) Policy is lacking as it did not recognise the active participation of the tribal communities in the planning and the decision making process. There is inherent contradiction seen in the policy between the advocacy for the use of the traditional knowledge of the tribes and for the commercial exploitation of the forests. (ibid, 92-93) Thus, the conflict of interest between the state and the tribes lead to the marginalisation of the tribes in terms of their loss of not only rights over forest, but also the natural access to the forest resources.

4.4b.Situation of Tribes in Forest Villages in Assam:

The concept of the forest villages emerged in the early part of the twentieth century and it was a British Government's policy which was initially designed to create a pool of free labourer which could assure the continuous supply of the labour for their expansion activities such as railways. The forest Department under the colonial government also required the labour for its work and so it makes an arrangement for the settlement of the labourer in the forest in lieu of their fixed

amount of work to the department. As per as the report of the Committee on Forestry Programmes for Alleviation of Poverty , GOI(1984), there are 5000 forest villages in India which have two lakh scheduled tribes families and they are untouched by the planning process. (Sonowal, 1997) Assam has altogether 524 forest villages and 47.11% of the inhabitants of these villages are tribes. (Report, AIRTSc, 1999, 35)

Forest villages present a condition of extreme poverty and destitution because the tribes in these villages do not have the right to cultivate in these lands as they were regarded as government's land. (ibid) The nature of marginalisation of the people of the forest villages, mostly tribes, are different because of the nature of the socio-political history of the forest villages.

Sonowal (1997) in his study of the forest villages of the Dibrugarh district of Assam have shown how the various provisions aimed to bring change and alleviation of the poverty of the forest villagers failed because of the structural impediments associated with the working of the forest department. He mentioned that the Dibrugarh District was inhabited by the tribal communities like the Sonowal Kacharis and the Mising who did not like to be associated with the forest department as labour, and so the forest department brought lot of people from the neighbouring areas that were affected by the flood after the earthquake of the 1950. Thus it served the two purposes for the forest department as it could not only serve the purpose of the rehabilitation of the flood affected people, but it could also fulfil the need of labour for the forest department. It was to be noted that although the forest villages in Dibrugarh were established after independence, the same colonial policies were adopted where the forest villagers were given 10 bighas of the cultivable land for the families and two to five bighas as homestead and garden plot but without any legal rights. Later on, some more people from the nearby areas also shifted first for cultivation and later to settle down permanently, thereby acquiring much bigger amount of land than allotted by the forest department. Thus, it created a situation where the various development activity initiated by the forest department could not work for their benefit. (Ibid) Sonowal mentioned how the association of the villagers with the forest department and the nature of the history deprive them of the various formal benefits and thus marginalises them.

He mentioned that one process of exploitation of the forest villagers was through the system of the 'forced labour' by virtue of which the forest villagers have to render five days of free labour per adult per annum in lieu of the land allotted to them. The villagers were even given incentives for the increase amount of labour. It is to be noted that the forest officials could increase the amount of free labour days necessary on the basis of the own wish to the utter misery of the settlers. Although, the villagers have stopped giving free labour by the 1980s itself but the forest officials still maintain the record of the labour due from the villagers and thus they sometimes take away money and the other materials from the villagers in lieu of their work.(ibid, 2442)

There is also the problem of the education of the forest villages because they are under the jurisdiction of the forest department who do not take care of their appalling education conditions. In fact there are no school in the 27 forest villages of the district. Although a lower primary school was established but it was later closed down due to poor maintenance. The problem of the establishment of the school here is that the forest department do not allot the land for the purpose of the establishment of the school. Thus, the villagers have to take initiative to establish school in the private land. This creates the situation of pathetic condition of education of the forest villagers. (ibid, 2443)

The conditions of the health care facilities in the forest villages are also similar. The public health department can not establish health centre in the forest villages. There was only one health sub-centre established by the public health department in the Medela forest beat through irregular channel. But it also could not work properly due to conflict of jurisdiction with the forest department as the forest officials often decline to give permissions to the health workers to provide service in the forest village. (ibid)

The most worrisome issue is that the forest villagers are excluded of the most of welfare projects because as per the rule, the development projects meant for the forest villagers must be approved by the forest department. As a result the tribes residing in most of these villages are deprived of the ITDP's project. Even the villages do not come under the jurisdiction of the gram panchayat. As a result, the forest villagers are at mercy of the forest department for the various development activities

which are generally lacking. (ibid) Thus, the forest villagers are living in the condition of the very poor infrastructure, lack of proper health and education facilities and very less development programmes designed for them. The specific history of the forest villages itself is working as main cause of the marginalisation of the forest villagers due to poor empathy from the state and forest department.

4.5. Conclusion:

Thus, from the discussion in the chapter, it is seen that the situation of deprivation leading to marginalisation of tribes is not different in Assam against the rest of India.

Although, the tribes in Assam are illiterate, in poor economic and health conditions vis-a-vis the other non tribes, there are some internal differences as well. But apart from these, there are some specific socio-cultural and the historical factors which made the situation of the tribes worse in this part of the country. Two such factors are large scale illegal migration from East Bengal and other parts of India and very late introduction of the cash economy into the area. Of course, the large availability of the land and forest resources did not create any large scale tension in the region in the initial period. But, the continuous process of alienation and deprivation from the natural resources are creating livelihood crisis for the tribes as the resources themselves are limited.

Another issue is that the tribes in Assam feel marginalised not only vis-a-vis against the non-tribes but also against the other tribes as well as the elite sections of their own community. It is on the one hand due to the unequal nature of development of the various tribes and on the other hand the differences in the nature of the protective measures for the various groups. The complex nature of the feeling of the underdevelopment of the various tribes in the region along with their marginalisation cannot be explained without considering the complex socio-cultural history and the specificity of the region.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The distinctive nature of tribe as a social category is reflected in the study of the whole dissertation. The identity of tribes is understood in terms of their symbiotic association with nature for their livelihood. This is reflected in their socio-cultural pattern as well and this means that nature forms part of their life. This constitutes the identity of tribe, their distinctiveness vis-a-vis other communities.

The distinct socio-cultural organisation does not mean that tribe is homogenous category. The tribal groups are diverse in terms of their socio-economic situation. But along with these internal diversities, it constitutes definite characteristics of a social category, different from other non-tribal groups as the attempts to conceptualise tribe in the Indian context makes it clear.

While the tribe as politico-administrative concept emerged in the colonial period with the attempt from the British administrator and ethnographers to categorise and understand various social groups for their administrative convenience, it got its present political meaning on the basis of various constitutional debates and the debate in the post independence political arena about the nature of approach to be adopted towards various social groups. But the studies of the social scientists help us to have a broader meaning of tribes by understanding tribes in the context of other communities and thereby help to conceptualise it in the background of Indian society.

The common meaning of tribe is that it is a relatively isolated community in geographically inaccessible areas with primitive mode of existence in terms of low level of technology and practices. But the changes brought about in the tribal society led to many changes in their pattern of life that necessitate the change in the conception of tribe. But, regardless of these changes, they are still continuing in the mode of living that has close and symbiotic relation with nature, albeit to a lesser extent.

The concept of tribe is a dynamic one that has changing meaning over the period of time and in different context. While some scholars see tribes as equivalent to the primitive communities of pre-colonial period who have sub human futures,

others have seen it as only colonial construction. On the line of modernisation, tribe is understood as having the negative characters of the traditional society and in the process of evolution to modern group. These conceptualisations are problematic as they reflect the western biases and cultural relativism that negated the presence of objective understanding especially of the subaltern position.

The multiculturalism of the Indian society demands the understanding of any community in the broader context of the whole society. It implies that the study of tribe in isolation will not serve the purpose if we do not see it in the framework of social structure of Indian society that incorporates other groups as well. In this context, caste as a part of Indian society that has vast impact on the working of the society through ages demands the study of tribe in relation to them. The specificity of the Indian context have reflected that the tribes have an affinity for the caste society, although it is not clear how they are included into the Hindu fold and then undergoes the process of Sanskritisation. Even the framework of understanding the Sanskritisation in case of tribes is different from the other caste groups.

The issue of identity of tribes necessitate the understanding of tribe with reference to ethnic group and nation. It is found that it is problematic to equate tribe with the ethnic group or the nation directly. But, there may have some relation of tribes group to ethnicity and nation formation as the tribal identity may work as resource in the process of formation of the ethnic group and then forming into or breaking away from nation.

The debate on the conceptualisation of tribe got new impetus with the emerging debate on indigenous people at the international level. The debate on the indigenous people at the international level has large impact on the understanding of the tribe in the context of India because of the similarity of the context of debate about indigenous people and tribe. Although, the concept of indigenous people provides an important framework for understanding the tribes in India but tribes cannot be taken as only indigenous group of India due to complex nature of migration prevailed in the region.

Further rights granted as indigenous people does not address the displacement and the destitution caused by economic growth and state control of natural resources.

The studies of conceptualisation of the tribes have shown that it is essential to study the approaches adopted for the development of the tribes considering the specific socio-economic and the cultural situation of tribes. We found that the approaches to tribal development are changing over time depending on the changing nature of administration and the social situation. The major debate between Elwin and Ghurye provided the basic framework for the development of the tribes. The 'isolation-assimilation' approach also show the colonial and nationalist's differences in their approach to tribal development. But, there is inherent logic of integration of the tribes in every policies of the government in the post independence period, rather than more violent 'assimilation' which can even put the tribal identity in stake.

Further, although it is seen that there is a shift in the nature of policy adopted for tribes from isolation to integration, the policy of segregation is underlying approach in the same time considering the distinct culture and economy of the tribes. But the irony of the whole process of segregation in the name of the tribal development is that, although it prohibits the non-tribal commoner to enter into the areas dominated by tribes for business or other purposes, but when it comes to the matter of interest of the state like revenue collection for the state, there is no self restraint, even if it may dispossess the tribes of their life and livelihoods. Thus the conflict is inherent in the basic approach itself towards tribes.

When we see the more specific issues of relation of tribes with nature and the changing dimension of their relation and the conflict created in the process of development, we observed that the development policies adopted from outside, mainly by the state agencies are not always able to meet the demands of the tribal identity in terms of their intricate association with nature. By using the Political Ecology framework to understand the relation of the tribes with nature, it is found that the tribes are dispossessed from the natural resources with which they have the close relation, mainly because they are less powerful than the state or outside group. This is true for every case of land and forest. Even the changing nature of agriculture in the area inhabited by tribes necessitate the change in the nature of control over the resources which not only change the class dimension of the tribal society, but in the process creates a class of people who are dispossessed of their livelihood and hence impoverishment. The condition of the tribes goes beyond impoverishment and it is a source of their marginalisation as the relation of the tribes with nature is not only for

livelihood, but for their culture or way of life and hence their whole knowledge system is associated with it. Thus, dispossessing the tribes from the natural resources also means alienation from their culture and knowledge system apart from livelihood and hence marginalisation.

In this context, we see the importance of cultural politics i.e the culture itself is a site of contestation in shaping this kind of marginalisation. It is because of the different meaning the culture of different groups attaches to the natural resources leads to the appropriation of the resources by the politically powerful group thereby depriving the less powerful one's their right over the resources. The tribal understanding of nature in terms of their symbiotic and existential relation is not compatible with the understanding of the state about nature and natural resources as for the latter natural resources should meet the demand of the time and hence the demand for profit maximisation. It is a process of marginalisation of tribes.

The understanding of the process of marginalisation of tribes in India shows that there is conflict of interest with the existing socio-political approach to tribes which fails to take into account the tribal association with nature beyond livelihood which shape their identity as well. Thus it is essential to give due importance to the tribes and their close and more direct relation with the natural resources, especially land and forest. But conflict in interest among the tribes with that of Britishers first and then the Indian state dispossessed the former of their substantial base of their livelihood and more importantly from the life system itself. The losses of control over the resources which are so important to the life and livelihood of the tribes have created a situation of feeling of marginalisation by the tribes.

The condition of tribes in Assam is not better in comparison to the tribes in other part of India. It is found that the conditions of tribes are not only socio-economically similar to the tribes at all India level but nature of the tribal development policies also has an all India orientation. But it needs to emphasise that failure to importance to the historical and the social specificity of the tribes in Assam lead to further marginalisation of the tribes. The tribes are dispossessed of the land and forest resources and hence the livelihood, both due to colonial and post colonial policies in Assam; as in other parts of India. Along with this, the large scale illegal migration from East Bengal, migration of the plantation labourers from Central India

makes the situation worse for the tribes in Assam. The British's new land revenue policy coupled with very the late introduction of the cash economy in the region make the tribes as well as the non tribes vulnerable to sold off the land at throw away prices for repaying revenue or other debt. Thus, we can say they, along with the structural processes of marginalisation of the tribes seen in all India level, it is essential to look into the specific socio cultural history of Assam to have a proper understanding of the marginalisation of tribes here.

Thus, it is found that the tribes are distinct social category because of their close relation with nature for both life and livelihood. This close relation is reflected in the mode of living, customs, belief and practices and hence in their culture itself. It shapes the identity of tribes vis-a-vis the non tribes. But the adoption of the development policies without consideration of the specificity of the tribal situation lead to loss of the control of their over the natural resources. It is not only the process of loss of control over resources but of marginalisation as they do not have the control over the resources over which they have existential relation. The subsistence economy of the tribes therefore is in threat along with their livelihood itself. Besides, it is the conflict over the culture of the tribes as the close relation with the nature forms the basic tenet of the tribal culture. This dispossession is also associated with the feeling of powerlessness to control their own fate and hence loss of identity and marginalisation. It is the identity of the tribes which can be defined in terms of their specificity as a social category, their socio-cultural history and conditions. Loss of identity in this case means loss of their root, their association with nature.

Further, it is not only the loss of control over the natural resources. It also means loss of control over cultural autonomy, knowledge and hence it creates the situation of marginalisation. The age old association of the tribes with nature creates a specific cultural domain, a body of knowledge, which is in stake in the process of development.

The failure of the tribal development to take into consideration the specific socio-economic and cultural conditions of the tribes led to the impoverishment of the tribes from the means of livelihood. This impoverishment is marginalisation for tribes as this loss is the loss of their culture, their knowledge system and ultimately their way of life.

As a survey of literature, this dissertation has attempted to focus on the debate and discourses on development, rather than on data. A more detailed social history of tribes in Assam with an emphasis on their society, culture and ecological ethos emerging from livelihood activities would have been desirable, but would have required emphasis on ethnographic material. The scope of this dissertation has been limited to the macro issues relating to the centrality of land and forest to tribal lives and livelihood.

A careful socio-historical study of a region in Assam to examine how the issues discussed in the foregoing chapters have been actually played out would be our future objective. This work is a preliminary step in that direction.

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