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SHIFTING AGRICULTURE AND TRIBAL LIVELIHOODS: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL DIALOGUE

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Abstract: *Shifting cultivation has generated a lot of discussion among sociologists, anthropologists, environmentalists, and legislators. They have mostly focused their queries and concerns on two fronts: firstly, the productivity of the indigenous community in comparison to deforestation and how much of it depends on them for a living. Secondly, about development initiatives vs. the practitioners' displacement—that is, the population groups that are indigenous or tribal and engage in this type of agriculture. Nevertheless, there isn't much research that has examined the economic benefits of this straightforward agricultural method throughout the world, especially in India. The economy of shifting agriculture contends that the cultivation method is suboptimal, resulting in poor productivity and high labor intensity. One of the most effective land use strategies is one in which production is dependent on minimal inputs and fluctuates.*

Keywords— *Indian Tribe, Tribal Economy, Shifting Cultivation, Tribal Culture, Occupational Changes.*

INRODUCTION

Shifting farming is a primitive agricultural practice that dates back thousands of years. It is thought to have been the first stage in the change in human history from hunting and collecting food to producing it. According to Rowley-Conwy (2004), shifting farming has existed since prehistoric and ancient times. It has also been discovered that many people around the world continue to engage in this type of gardening. As a result, this method is seen as having "survived longest" and as a precursor to agricultural

evolution. Many indigenous cultures and asdivasis communities continue to practice it now in deep tropical and sub-tropical parts of Australia, Asia, Africa, and South America. Shifting cultivation differs from settled cultivation in that it incorporates customs and rituals that have been formed over time.

AGRICULTURE AND TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD

The shifting cultivation has generated a lot of discussion among anthropologists, economists, policymakers, environmentalists, and tribal development specialists. The problems associated with swidden are examined from an ecological, economic, and institutional perspective. Economic difficulties are connected to factor use, production, and efficiency in swidden, whereas ecological elements deal with concepts relating to deforestation/forest degradation, biodiversity loss, soil erosion, nutrient loss, and carrying capacity. Property rights, conventions, laws, market integration strategies, technology, and the functions of government and outside organizations are all considered institutional concerns in Sweden.

The economics of swidden is an intriguing and analytically challenging topic to study. It must be examined from a number of angles, including the economics of land usage, production techniques, and productivity in terms of both energy and real output. Swidden agriculture's economics have always been criticized for being a less-than-ideal technique of production, having a high labor intensity, and having low output. This type of agriculture is supported by the claim that it is among the most efficient land uses, with minimal inputs needed to produce the same level of output. Another argument made for swidden is that shifting farmers typically maximize their yield in accordance with natural conditions and long-term sustainable land use. It is also argued that swidden farming has historically been a labor-intensive method of production; clearing primary forests where significant tree growth necessitates a labor-intensive workforce, and the yield is not demonstrably higher than from well-grown secondary forests; however, this is a method of cultivation where very little capital is used, save for a few tools like hoe axes; hence, the intensity makes little sense. In general, it appears that a plowing system minimizes labor input because of the technology involved as compared with the traditional slash and burn method.

TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Shifting cultivation as a component of the land use system. It is necessary to assess shifting cultivation as an inventive agricultural practice and as a means of supporting the life of a particular population group. To understand the connection between shifting cultivation and tribal livelihood, it is also

necessary to research production factors, the economics of production, energy use efficiency, and output efficiency in particular ecological setups. In India, shifting agriculture has long been a common practice among tribes. On 4.37 million hectares of land spanning 11 states, about 5.0 million tribal families use this practice. Of all the Indian states, Orissa is thought to have the most acreage used for shifting cultivation. It is problematic to make a systematic approach to defining shifting cultivation because of the heterogeneous issues involved in this form of cultivation, including topography, agro-climate, and institutional aspects. But it can be said that it is a procedure of agricultural practice, particularly in the forest and hilly tracts where plough agriculture is difficult. It includes the clearing and cultivation of patches of forest in rotation. The individual plots are burned and cultivated for a few years and left fallow for a long period of time to allow the vegetation and soil to rejuvenate and recover the lost nutrients.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it can be said that shifting cultivation is estimated to support the livelihoods of millions of people, mainly in tropical countries. In India, millions of tribal people sustain their livelihoods through shifting cultivation. The shifting cultivation is also responsible for deforestation, biodiversity loss, and soil erosion. Several anthropological studies reflect and argue that the factors of production, economics of production, energy use efficiency, and output efficiency in specific ecological set-ups are linked to the tribal livelihood and sustenance of the practitioners. Another approach in economic anthropology takes a relatively suitable criterion of relationship between crop cultivation and fallowing within the total length of one cycle of land utilization to clear up the issue of the environmental impact of livelihood.

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