

FOREST ECOLOGY AND LIVELIHOOD : A STUDY AMONG THE CHOUKHUTIA BHUNJIA TRIBE OF GARIABAND, CHHATTISGARH

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Abstract

Across generations, the forest and century old native communities have symbiotic relationships. Nurturing the natural resources in-and-around their forest gives them a sense of belongingness and provides a durable life support system. During last century due to the aggressive in-roads of capital in different forms into the tribal habitat, natives are alienated from their usufruct rights over natural resources. This has affected not only their life and livelihoods in an accelerating pace but also weakened their cultural dependency on natural resources. Many anthropologists took up studies on man-nature relationship from holistic perspective and built theories such as: cultural ecology, neo-evolutionism, neo-functionalism and human ecology and logically justified the nexus between people, organization, environment and technology.

This paper, based on a few month-long field work in Gariaband of Chhattisgarh- a tribal dominated district, is an attempt to understand the forest ecology and change in the livelihood of Choukhutia Bhunjia tribe in response to recent development activities that affected their major sources of livelihood. The study ascertained that the policies adopted by Government have 'encroached' forest resources of Choukhutia Bhunjia's habitat and forced the natives to compromise with degraded forest ecosystem of declined biodiversity.

Keywords : Tribal people, Nature, Livelihood, State policies

Introduction

Forest precedes human beings and deforestation follows them. Being a part of nature, human groups exploit nature through acquired skill, knowledge and technology for their safety and survival. Keeping this in mind, human society is always concerned with change for the betterment. The State as an authoritative institution, adopts aggressive approach using financial, physical and natural resources for 'development' while neglects the eco-cultural livelihood resources of the community. The development parameters also vary across space and time to assess the transformation of society and the State. Thus, possession and utilization of human and non-human

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