VI: NEW FINDINGS

The present study has brought to surface the fact that shifting cultivation among the Pauri Bhuyan is a deep-rooted and time-honoured practice found integrated and inter-twined with political, religious and social system and is more a social activity than an economic pursuit. It ensures unity, collective outlook and cohesiveness of various units of social organisations like the family, lineage group and the village as well as at the time of important societal activities. The institutions, like the association of unmarried youths and the village political organization exhibit in their behaviour, loyalty and emotional attachment among the members at the time of actual operations. In short the study among the Pauri Bhuyan has shown,

1. that the process is backed by mythical foundation and motivated by divine sanctions and was adopted as the means of survival from time immemorial;
2. that it is a practice adopted to the eco-system of the habitat;
3. that it is a nucleus of an occupational complex around which other economic pursuits such as settled cultivation, forest produce collection, hunting, fishing, livestock rearing and wage-earning revolve;
4. that the community being the "master of the soil" continued to have traditional ownership of land till the State Government brought the region within its administration after independence;
5. that the community continued to enjoy their traditional rights in the use of land and forest located within the village territory;
6. that ownership of swidden though vested in the village community, the individuals/households have only usufructory rights;

7. that the selection of the swidden and distribution of patches among households follow group deliberations and decisions taken in the meetings of the village elders under the headman;

8. that the size of patches allotted is proportional to the need and manpower available to the allotee;

9. that in the allotment, the secular headman, the Grampanchayat Ward Member, the village priest and the destitutes receive priority;

10. that at present the resting period is reduced to 7 to 8 years in stead of 12 to 15 years in the past;

11. that a clearing is used normally for 2 to 3 years;

12. that farming operations are initiated by village priest after performing necessary rituals;

13. that it is a collective production system with the village at the apex and the household at the bottom;

14. that it is carried through the use of traditional skills and techniques;

15. that implements are simple, consisting of bullock drawn ploughs and hand tools;

16. that it is primarily labour intensive;

17. that it is accomplished by household labour complement or supplemented by mutual help between participating households;
18. that it is free from the employment of paid labour;
19. that different cropping pattern is carried on in the same patch in different years of cultivation;
20. that a number of crops are simultaneously raised in different parts of the same patch under first and second year cultivation;
21. that certain crops like cereals and vegetables are primarily for subsistence and a few specialised crop like oil seeds and pulses for exchange;
22. that it facilitates the collection of other items like fuel, timber, edible leaves, fruits and shoots simultaneously;
23. that it does not run the risk of total crop failure either due to drought or excessive rain as crops ripen one after another at different times:
24. that it is functionally linked with the socio-cultural systems of which it is a part; and
25. that it is still a way of life with a number of inherent advantages in the context of its practices.