Shifting cultivation has become a problem of great concern of the administrators, planners and the public at large both at national and international levels to find out ways and means for its practical solution. In various states and also at all-India level the efforts to contain it has been still going on since independence. During the successive Five Year Plans increasing importance has been attached to put end to it through various measures. Still then, the practice in many inaccessible areas is going on, causing anxiety to the Government and the public, and also to its practitioners themselves. In those areas, where it has been stopped either due to Government measures or non-availability of swidden, the swiddeners have been passing through a crucial period. Keeping these in mind efforts have been made to some to study the system of shifting cultivation for analysing factors responsible for its continuance and to find out suitable measures and viable alternatives to wean them away from it. Such studies have succeeded in dispelling the one-sided view denouncing shifting cultivation as 'wasteful system of land use', 'necessary evil' causing degradation of the quality of environment and at the same time in emphasizing it as a 'way of life', a 'time-honoured system' adopted by the people in their effort to adjust themselves with the ecological compulsions of the region, and in some cases it is based on mythological foundation. Accordingly, the present rethinking on the approach to the problem of shifting cultivation has
two dimensions. In the first place emphasis has been given for improving the quality of environment and in the second place on improvement of the quality of life of the swiddeners. In course of their studies conducted on shifting cultivation several experts have observed that the problem of shifting cultivation is not similar in all areas/communities and no generalisation may be made and as such no common set of development programme will be adopted. In other words, programmes aimed at bringing sustainable development among each swiddening community, should base on a detailed study probing deeper into various aspects associated with the system.

In Orissa shifting cultivation is still practised by a large proportion of tribal population in various parts as an important source of livelihood. However, studies on most of the communities have not been undertaken to examine shifting cultivation in greater detail, the extent of its influence on various aspects of the life of the swiddening communities. In the present research exercise based on an indepth study among the Pauri Bhuyan of Keonjhar district, a humble attempt has been made to present a comprehensive picture of the pattern and rhythm of the practice of shifting cultivation and its bearing on various aspects of their life. It is an exploratory study conducted in two selected villages with a view to outline the emergence of the practice and its socio-cultural ramifications. It is hoped that the present piece of research will be of some help to the planners and the experts who are interested in knowing the swiddeners in their attempt to bring a solution to the problem.

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