Chapter 7.

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CHAPTER 7

CHANGES IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE

Economy is an important constituent of the community life. It plays a vital role in the formation of cultural and social structure of a society. As the activities associated with the fulfillment of material wants of the people are the parts of economic life, the study of socio-economic life of the tribal people helps us to understand the important aspects of their culture. David Throsby opines as follows:

Economic discourse and the operation of economic systems function within a cultural context; similarly cultural relationships and process can also be seen to exist within an economic environment and can themselves be interpreted in economic terms. If culture can be thought of as a system of beliefs, values, customs, etc. shared by a group, then cultural interactions among members of the group or between them and members of other groups can be modeled as transactions and exchanges of symbolic or material goods within an economizing framework. He argues that the interpretation of culture in functional terms, we can identify the notion of culture as economy and interpretation of culture as residing within an economic milieu.

Both economy and culture of a community are inter-related. If economic condition of a society is developed or changed, the cultural life of the given society is also influenced accordingly. Similarly, the economic life and economic development of a particular society are always influenced by their cultural system. The study of economic system consists of many economic theories given by the eminent economists in different times. But this discussion focuses only on the changes in the socio-economic sphere of the Tiwa life and inter-relationship between the economy and culture by providing examples from Tiwa society.
7.1. Tribal Economy:

Economy can be divided into two broad categories, viz. production-consumption type economy and production-consumption-distribution type economy. Tribal economy of Assam is mainly of subsistence type and they fall into the broad category of production-consumption economy. In production-consumption economy production is made according to the need. On the contrary, the production-consumption-distribution economy is based on the accumulation of economic surplus or surplus production. The following four stages have been mentioned by the economists as the main stages of economic development of the tribal people. Those are: (i) Hunting and food gathering, (ii) Pastoral, (iii) Agricultural and (iv) Technological.

The economy of the tribes of North-East India is based on agriculture. Tribal agriculture is dependent on two types of cultivation, viz. shifting cultivation and settled cultivation. The hill tribes mainly depend on shifting cultivation that is known as Jhuming. Almost all the tribal people of the North East India are cultivators. Therefore, the economy of the people of these areas is dependent on agriculture. The basic principles of their economy are: production for consumption, no capital investment, investment of excess wealth for enhancement of prestige and kin oriented economic co-operation.

The modern economy and the tribal economy are different from each other. Modern economy is related to production, distribution, exchange and consumption. S. L. Dosi and P. C. Jain state that, the tribal economy can be looked at from two different perspectives. One is from the point of view of production, distribution and consumption and another is actor oriented where the actors use available means to maximize value. The former is called system oriented or subsistence economy and the later is called actor oriented or formal economy. In system oriented or subsistence economy the actor or individual has no determining voice in production process. The actor oriented or formal economy is basically the economy of the present market, where
individual maximize their value and base their behaviour on cost-benefit, and increase the value of economy. In other words tribal economy is the economy of household and generally their production is only for self-consumption. But they also exchange their surplus production in traditional markets like hat and mela. These traditional markets have important roles on their economy. On the contrary, modern economy is rational that wants to work on the cost-benefit idiom.

7.2. Socio-Economic Life of the Tiwas:

Agriculture is the basic economy of the Tiwas. In the hill areas they depend on shifting cultivation. But in the plains, permanent cultivation is practiced by them. Although there had been the legendary reference of hunting as the basic traditional profession of the Tiwas, in the present social system it is neither popular nor practical. Now, almost 70 percent of the total populations of the Tiwas engage in cultivation. Agricultural works of the Tiwas begin after celebrating the Jongkhong puja during the month of May-June. All villagers participate in this puja. It is against of the tradition of the Tiwas to involve in agricultural operations before celebrating Jongkhong puja in community basis.

Both staple and cash crops are cultivated by the Tiwas. The Sali variety (wet cultivation) is the major crop of the plains Tiwas. Boro, Ahu and Bao varieties of paddy are also grown. The Ahu paddy is cultivated in high lying land during pre-monsoon season. Boro paddy is cultivated in winter. During the summer season Sali and Bao paddies are cultivated in low lying field where heavy inundation occurs. In November-December, the crops are ready for harvesting. Both men and women take part in harvesting, generally women reap the crop and men join only if the area of the field is large. For the completion of agricultural work there is the corporate activity like Hadarikhel system among the Tiwas. Friends and relatives also help, but that would be on a personal basis and without compulsion.
Besides the paddy cultivation, horticultural cash crops and seasonal vegetables like gourd, pumpkin, brinjal, radish and chilli are also grown by plain Tiwas. The most common horticultural crop is areca nut, which covers a large area in the backyard. The produce is for home consumption as well as for sale. Bamboo is another important plant used for making baskets and fencing, construction and repairs of the houses, sheds for cattle and pigs or for granary. Mustard, jute and sugarcane are also grown in Tiwa families. In the plains the cultivation of land is done by ploughing. Surplus stocks of their products are sold in the markets for purchasing items of daily use. Besides the cultivation, spinning and weaving, fishery, piggery, poultry and basketry are also done by the Tiwas.

7.3. The Changing Scenario of Socio-Economic Life:
7.3.1. Changes in the Field of Agricultural Operations:

It has been mentioned already that the Tiwa-Economy is based on agriculture. Presently the main varieties of crops cultivated by the Tiwas are as follows:

(i) **Sali**: It is the main crop cultivated by the Tiwas during summer season. The varieties are *lasmonbhug, kaina sali, aaka Sali, kumol, joha, baomusa, goya, aijong,* and *porimol* are cultivated by them. The *ranjeet, bahadur, biplab* and *untrish* are some new varieties of *Sali* paddy.

(ii) **Baa**: The *Baa* variety is cultivated in low laying land, as it requires sufficient water. The varieties are mainly *mikir bao, madolbao, tora bao, bora.*

(iii) **Boro**: The *Boro* variety is cultivated during the winter season (December-January), though it requires sufficient water. It is ready for harvest during the pre-monsoon period
The names of some varieties are ranjeet, biplab, pankaj, bahadur and untrish.

(iv) Ahu: the Ahu variety does not require much water though it is cultivated during the summer season (February-March). It is harvested during the pre-winter season (August-September).

The Tiwas are hard working people and start working hard early in their life. But most of them do not have sufficient land for cultivation. During the field visit it is found that most of them cultivate in the rented land of other people of neighbouring villages. It is locally known as Adhi loa system. In this system, the landless Tiwas get land and crops for cultivation from the original land owner. In return, they have to give half of their products to the land owner after harvesting it. Although some of the Tiwas have good agricultural lands, yet their agriculture is at subsistence level. The main cause of this state of affair is the age-old pattern of cultivation with indigenous tools and implements, use of traditional seeds and organic fertilizer. Though a small number of families have adopted improved agricultural practices like use of tractors, power tillers, high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, yet these new practices have been accepted in a half hearted manner. The villagers generally do not like innovative agricultural practices mainly because of their traditional faith in the God of cultivation who may be displeased if new methods are used. People are not ready to give up their age-old practices and traditions.

The literacy rate is very low amongst the Tiwas. Illiteracy is a cause of their economic under-development in every village. Due to the lack of education they do not have any idea about modern equipment of cultivation and modern varieties of seeds. Their economy is kin based economy. All of the family members do engage in agricultural operations. Generally parents cannot afford the educational expenditure of their wards. Rather they are
compelled to engage them in agricultural and domestic works. Population explosion is another cause of their economic-underdevelopment. They believe that the children are the gift of God and having more children means more helping hands in their agricultural works. This type of belief has an impact on the population explosion. It is found somewhat true in the case of poor families. Because, the poor families cannot afford wage labourers for work in the agricultural fields. Rather they are dependant on the kin based economic activities.

There is a division of labour based on gender in agricultural and domestic works. Men take the responsibility of the outside work such as ploughing, harvesting the paddy, carrying the paddy to home, fishing, basketry and looking after domestic animals. Women take the responsibility of all the domestic chores as well as planting and harvesting, fishing, and take care of the children so on and so forth.

7.3.2. Changing Role of Women in Economic Activities:

Men and women are two equal components of the human society and are considered complementary to each other in all aspects of life. But the role and status played and enjoyed by these two components are not same in every human society. Women have different role and status in a society according to its social norms. Tiwa women have also different role and status in their family economy which is based on division of labour. Their roles in family economy can be discussed as follows:

\[ (i) \]

*In the Field of Agriculture:* Without participation of womenfolk, agriculture is not possible for a Tiwa family. The female members of every household work hard during the time of planting and harvesting the paddy. For the completion of agricultural work there are some co-operative
activities like Hadari-khel that has already been discussed in chapter 5.

(ii) **Custody of Granary of the Family:** It is a common practice of the Tiwa society that the granary of a family is kept under the custody of the wife. Her husband can not dispose off paddy without prior discussion with her.

(iii) **Custody of the Cattle, Poultry and Pigs of the Family:** All female members of a family are to be the owners of the cattle, poultry and pigs. The father, who is the head of the family, has to take permission from his wife or daughters if he desires to sell off any cattle, poultry or pigs of the family.

(iv) **Production of Zu on Commercial Basis:** Zu is an important commodity of the Tiwas. It is produced and consumed daily and regularly. Production of zu is not only for their self consumption but also for the people of other castes living in neighbouring villages as zu is popular among them too and consumed by other people irrespective of caste and creed. Hence, Tiwa women earn money by selling it. Women are the ones who do all works relating to zu production at home.

(v) **Weaving:** Every indigenous community in this region, tribal or non-tribal, in the hills or in the plains has their own range of textiles produced by the women in their traditional looms. Weaving is compulsory activity of Tiwa women. Hence, every Tiwa girl is bound to weave her traditional dresses herself. Traditional dress of women consists of three pieces of clothes e.g. Kasang (lower garment), Jaskai or Phaskai (upper garment) and Thongali (waistband). The traditional dress in the case of men folk consists of five
pieces of clothes; they are Tagla (shirt), Muga dhoti (lower garment), Kamas or Seleng (upper garment), Thangali (waistband) and Phaga (turban). Women are the bearer of weaving tradition. It is observed that women earn good amount of money by selling cloths woven by them and thus provide financial help to the family.

(vi) Self-help Groups among Tiwa Women: Nowadays, weavers’ association is established in Tiwa villages with the view to weave cloths in community basis. The weavers are self employed and get financial benefits from the weavers’ association. The self-help groups also earn money from poultry, pigs and cattle rearing in community basis. The purpose of self-help groups is to help the members during the time of distress or hardship. Self-help groups have gone a long way in providing sustenance to otherwise unprivileged underdeveloped needy families.

7.3.3. Changes in the Fields of Animal Husbandry and Handicrafts:

Animal husbandry and handicrafts are two spheres that help in economic upliftment of the Tiwas. Pigs, poultry, and cattle rearing are common practices for many families. Pigs are reared for sale. They earn good amount of money by selling pigs. Poultry is reared for selling of eggs and meats. Pigeon is also a common domestic bird. Cow, goat and buffaloes are common animals reared by them. Milk produced from these animals is another commodity to be sold in market. Generally cow and buffaloes are reared for the dwell purposes of engaging them in agricultural work as well as selling. Tiwa women take the main responsibilities in this task.

Tiwa males are expert in bamboo and cane work. They produce beautifully designed bamboo and cane household items for the purpose of
sale. The bamboo and cane items produced by the Tiwa men are popular among all of the rural people of Assam. Some bamboo and cane made items are: baskets, Japi (traditional umbrella), Dala (bamboo tray or platter), Saloni (bamboo sieve) and fishing tools. Besides these household items, now a days they produce bamboo and cane made show pieces like Xorai (raised tray with cover), Bota (raised tray), puppets and masks.

7.3.4. Observations on Jonbil Mela as a Living Institution of Barter:

In tribal dominated areas, the presence of periodical market is a common fact. The Tiwas a traditional periodical market or fair known as Jonbil Mela held once in a year after the Magh Bihu (January) at the bank of Jonbil lake; 2 k.m away from Jagiroad of Marigaon district. Now a days the barter system has become obsolete. But it is only the Jonbil Mela of Tiwa community where barter system is still in use. This fair is popular amongst the Tiwas. People of other community too show interest in this Mela. Moreover, tourists both domestic and foreign are attracted to this Mela because of the uncommon practice of barter system.

Legends has it that Tiwa king Pranteswar Singha while sailing across the lake saw the reflection of the Moon in water of the lake and thus named this lake as Jonbil. The original inhabitation of the Tiwas was in the hills of present Karbi Anglong district. They migrated to the plains probably in 13th century. The Jonbil Mela is supposed to have started from the 14th century. It's a known fact that essential commodities like salt, oil, fish are not available in hill areas, hence this fair was started for the convenience of both the hill and plain people. Here the hill people could procure their essential commodities in exchange to their own products from the plain people. They used the system of barter instead of money. Still this tradition of barter exists among the Tiwas.
Formally *Jonbil Mela* is held for three days, but now, informally it continues for four to five days. The *Mela* starts on the first Thursday of the month of Magh (during January) and ends on Saturday. On the first day the hill Tiwas, the Khasis, the Garos, the Karbis, the Jaintias come to this place with their agricultural products viz. sweet potato, pumpkin, gourd, arum roots, bamboo shoots, chilli, turmeric, ginger and medicinal herbs and they build temporary huts using the stubble of paddy. The plain people address them as *Mama* (maternal uncle) and *Mami* (Aunt) in the fair. The shops with modern items are started from this day. On this day the king of Gobha Deep Sing Deoraja and his officials and invited guests and the members of *Jonbil Mela* committee enjoy a community feast together in the courtyard of the permanent office of the *Jonbil Mela* committee. Exchange of commodities through barter system and community fishing starts from the very early morning of the second day. Community fishing is done by the Tiwas of this area in the *Jonbil* Lake. People enjoy the community fishing with full enthusiasm here. Formerly, Tiwa king came to observe this community fishing but now the king does not come to the fair on second day. After that, the cock fight is held in the main field of the fair. Formerly buffalo fight was also held on this day but now it is not in practice. On the third morning, the hill people become ready to go back to their respective places and dismantle their temporary huts and add fire to them; this way they pray to the *Agni Devta* (God of Fire) on the eve of Magh Bihu. Another attraction of this fair besides the continuity of barter system is the presence of the Gobha king in his royal regalia along with his officials on third day. It is an assembly of all kings of the small states like Gobha. Formerly, Gobha king used to come to this fair on elephant but now he comes in car. Now, the officials and escorts of the Gobha king also come on bikes. On this particular day the Gobha king Deep Sing Deoraja, who is a student of class IX in Alpha English High School of Shillong, is treated with full honour by his subjects and offer him 'taxes' in the form of gifts. Moreover, the king is entertained by traditional Tiwa songs and dances. After finishing the cultural items and offering gifts to him, the officials visit each shop the fair and collect tax from them according to the size of the shop. One
portion of the collected money is still offered to the Gobha king to meet his family expenses and one portion is kept by the Jonbil Mela committee to meet the expenses of the fair. Formerly, this fair continued till the third day (Saturday) because the king and people of Gobha used to celebrate the Magh Bihu on Sunday after observing the fair. But now though the fair formally ends on third day, informally it continues for another two days.

Although it is a fair of barter system where traditional and home made items are sold, presently other stationary and essential commodities are also being marketed. Customers are seen to be keen for such things. Community fishing is part and parcel of the Jonbil Mela. A noticeable change observed in the case community fishing is that, from the last three years the quantity and variety of the fish has been decreased gradually due to the water and air pollution. The lake-water has been polluted by the Nagaon Paper Mill situated at Jagiroad.

The problem faced by the local people and Mela committee is that the committee does not have a permanent land for this fair. Committee arranges the area for the celebration of the Mela by paying Rs. 200/ for per Bigha as rent to the owner of the land. They manage to collect money from the shop owners of the Mela. They do not receive financial assistance from the government for organizing this Mela. The Mela ground is strewn over with polythin bags, broken glasses, rotten vegetables, and other rejects and the owner of the land find it difficult to clear the ground for cultivation after the Mela. There is lack of proper hygienic measure during the Mela.

This Mela is important for both economic and cultural points of view. Here, the Tiwas' traditional sports, performances, rituals and customs have been exhibited. In present day money-economy, barter system does not hold much value and importance. Even knowing that, the people are still indulging in it in the Jonbil Mela only because that it is accepted as a tradition of the people. Tradition dies hard. Presently, the noticeable change in Jonbil Mela is
that the expansion of the market of wooden material. People of this area wait for this fair to buy necessary wooden articles. The markets of garments and utensils are also other attractions of the Mela. Moreover, different types of modern things including electronic gadgets, metallic, plastic, bamboo, wooden and cane-made materials, vegetables and fruits are also sold here. This fair becomes so wide that it is no longer a fair of Tiwa people or tribal people but becomes a shared festival of the people of Assam. It is a fair of love and brotherhood. This fair helps in creating an atmosphere of brotherhood and love among the people.

This Mela is the best example of continuity and mixing tradition with modernity. Existence age-old barter system and modern currency in one fair is the best example of this fact. Again, arrival of king to the fair in his traditional royal regalia is a tradition. But his arrival by car is the example of modernity. Now, this fair has become a symbol of the Tiwa culture.

7.4 Culture and Economy:

7.4.1. Impact of Culture on Economic Activities: Examples from Proverbs:

Proverbs a branch of folk literature are the store house of the collective and ethnic wisdom of the various races and communities. Hence, proverbs are generally regarded as true and people use them in day to day life. It is observed that there is similarity of proverbs used by the people of different communities of this region. Proverbs can provide solution for different problems faced by the people in daily walk of life. Proverbs provide information and knowledge on environment, agriculture, medicine, trade and commerce, customs, traditions and manners. This discussion focuses on the proverbs related to agricultural knowledge. Human civilization initiated by the practice of agriculture.
about how farmer should take care of their staple and cash crops goes like thus:

_Gobare Paniye Pan_

_Nikai, Nirai Dhan_  

(Cow dung and water can nourish betel leaf  
Likewise weeding can nourish paddy)

Dried cow dung is a best soil conditioner for any kind of crops. It is used as an ingredient to prepare the soil for any kind of cultivation by the rural people. Similarly, sufficient water is needed for all kinds of cultivation more so for cultivation of betel leaves. Again paddy field is often covered by unnecessary plants and grasses that hamper their growth. Therefore, keeping the field clean by weeding from unnecessary plants and grass is necessary for natural growth and nourishment. Hence, this practical knowledge is spread and stored in the form of proverb by the rural people.

Other proverbs containing the knowledge about the plantation of banana, bamboo and other vegetables and fruits are as follows:

_Age ruba barit kal_

_Majot diba aan phosol_

_Pabo tetiya kolor sah_

_Ximat kodapi nuruba bah_  

(At first plant Banana tree

Then plant other crops or vegetables in between those trees

Then these crops or vegetables will get the shade

Never plant Bamboo tree on the boundary line)

The plantation of banana tree keeps the soil moist and soft and provides sufficient shades. Hence, if somebody can plant these trees, there will be good production. Bamboos are rapidly grown up plants. If bamboos are planted on the boundary, there is likelihood that it will in course of time become a bone
of contestation between two neighbours. Thus, it is prudent to avoid such situation.

*Phagunat jui*

*Chotot Mati*

*Xei Bah uthe dathi*

*(Make a bonfire in the bamboo-grove in the month of Phagun)*

*(Add soil on its root in the month of Chot)*

*(Then only bamboo-grove will have good growth)*

Bamboos are deciduous trees that lose leaves in the month of Phagun (February-March). If a bonfire is made in this month the heaps of garbage and the harmful insects, white ant, and crickets can be destroyed and the ash would work as fertilizer thus helping the grove in its good growth. After destroy the harmful insects, it is important to cover the roots of bamboo with soil. Another proverb that provides knowledge about the plantation of coconut tree is as follows:

*Narikolor gurit lunia mati*

*Xighre xighre lage guti*

*(Give salted soil on the root of coconut tree)*

*(Then the coconut tree will bear fruits frequently)*

Every one of us knows that coconut is mainly produced in the coastal area because of the salty soil. Salty soil can increase the production of coconut and at the same time destroy the insects from its roots. Let us take up another proverb that contains the knowledge about the plantation of other crops and vegetables:

*Xolla chahe Tula, tar ardhek Mula*

*Tar ardhek Dhan, bina chahe Pan*

*(Plough 16 times for planting cotton; plough half of it for planting radish*
Again plough half of it for paddy plantation, no need to plough for betel leaf plantation

Cotton plantation requires maximum ploughing of the field; in a nutshell it requires utmost care. The radish plantation required half its. Again half of it is sufficient for paddy cultivation. But betel leaf plantation does not require ploughing. It requires only water, organic manure and weeding for it nourishment and growth. What type of care is required for the gourd, chilli and brinjal plants can be known from the following proverb:

\textit{Lao, Jalakia, Bengenat chai}\\ Tehe xaisye bol pai}\textsuperscript{12}\\ (Give ashes to the plants of Gourd, Chilli and Brinjal\\ Then only these plants get strength)

Sprinkling ashes to the plants of gourd, chilli and brinjal plants can destroy the harmful insects from it. Moreover, ashes work as a fertilizer for these plants. Therefore, ashes can increase the strength and production guard chilli and brinjal.

For the cultivation of any kind of crops and plants require sufficient water. Water is a vital thing for all living beings and also for other living beings. So, it is necessary to preserve water for the future. This knowledge is reflected by following proverb:

\textit{Ahin katit rakhiba pani}\\ \textsuperscript{½}\\ Jenkoi rakhe rojai rani\\ (Reserve water in the month of Ahin and Kati (September-October)\\ Like a king protects his queen)

In the autumn season water in the paddy field starts drying up. But this is high time for the flowering and maturing of paddy. Lack of water during this time
may hamper the growth of paddy. Therefore, everyone should try to keep water in the paddy field in autumn season with utmost care.

There are many more proverbs found amongst them which contain agricultural knowledge. These proverbs are still circulating in their society. Thus the age old agricultural knowledge is still continuing amongst them through these proverbs.

7.4.2. Impact of Economic Development on their Culture:

In the present era of globalization, no ethnic communities are remaining isolated. Basically globalization is an economic process but it includes mass communication, culture, politics, and many other human endeavours. Globalization is worldwide phenomena; the impact of globalization can be felt in every part of the world. Globalization has been made possible through the establishment of worldwide, information and communication network. New telecommunication and computer networks have overcome the barriers of time and space. In the present era of globalization, the whole world has become a “global village”. The small places have been exposed to the wider world. Hence, the tribal homelands are linked with the region, state, nation and the world. Therefore, no group even tribal communities are remaining isolated and they have been influenced by the process of globalization and so also the Tiwas.

In the case of economy, the Tiwas now, have developed their agricultural practices. They have adopted improved agricultural practices like use of tractors, power tillers for tillage the paddy field, high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Of late, the Tiwas are more exposed to modern education and technology particularly the ones used in agriculture. Now, they do not hesitate to use modern technology and method in agricultural activities. Such shifts have yielded well. And this knowledge provides them good result in their agricultural production. Educated Tiwas take up different types of jobs. The Tiwas do not have any professional castes.
This has enabled them to take up any occupation they may find suitable. It is found during the field work that the new generation of the Tiwas is reluctant to agricultural works. Rather they prefer to work in towns and cities no matter what type of work. Industrial workers have been increased amongst them. And in this way economic condition has improved to a great extent.

Due to the increased purchasing capacity most of the Tiwa families now have Television, Music system, Motorcycle, Mobile phone and other Electronic gadgets. These things have influenced their traditional lifestyle and practice. For example, the main agricultural operations like sowing, planting, weeding and harvesting are quite laborious jobs. To get rid of the boredom resulting from the hard labour in the field and to get relaxed, folk songs—Lai Hilali is sung. Their folk songs reflect the social customs and traditions of their society. But at present instead of singing the communities own traditional songs people show interest in playing modern filmy Hindi songs or popular Assamese songs. Leisure time recreation in the past consisted of traditional games or performances, but now a days they prefer to go for movie or watch television or listen to the music. As a result their own culture has become a casualty.

On the contrary, improved economic condition has enabled the Tiwas to use still camera, video camera while celebrating their traditional festivals and ceremonies. Now a days it has become a regular practice with all to document the events like marriage and other cultural ceremonies. This kind of documentation of people’s cultural activities might be helpful in research on such activities. This kind of documentation of their culture can provide us knowledge about their cultural and social systems. Due to the increasing purchasing capacity through the sale of cash crops and the access to markets, the consumption of manufactured consumer goods have increased gradually. This has brought the Tiwa community into close economic co-operation with their neighbours.
From the above discussion it is found that the Tiwa economy has undergone many changes. Their living condition has also undergone change. Their economy or agricultural operations are influenced by their cultural system. Similarly, culture is also influenced by their economic condition. Prof. Arthur Lewis, a distinguished Economist writes:

"Economic growth depends on attitude to work, to wealth, to profit, to having children, to invention, to strangers, to adventure and so on, and all these attitudes flow from deep springs of human mind." [qtd. in Madhab, 2000]

Human mind set is designed according to the culture and the working attitude of people. Again the working attitude of the people is regulated by cultural setup. Cultural set up depends on different factors such as traditions, customs, religion, geographical environment, physical strength, education and so on and so forth. On the contrary economic condition has a great impact on the cultural continuity. Hence both are inter-related and influenced mutually. Diagrammatically it can be described as thus:

Fig. 12: Relationship between Culture and Economy
7.5. Conclusion:

Tiwa economy falls under the broad category of production-consumption type, where any kind of production is only for their self consumption. Hence, it is still in subsistence level, although a minority of the Tiwas enjoys a high economic status. As of now, the economic condition of the Tiwas has been improved in comparison to their earlier condition. But in comparison to other societies, their economic growth rate is low. Illiteracy is one reason of that. They are not that sharp in adapting new technology nor are they innovative. Their traditional professions are in a state of shambles. Entrepreneurship is still not a forte for the Tiwas. Some of them are petty businessmen but successful professionals are few and far between. Present day Tiwa young people are not seen to be inclined to adapt their own age old economic, social as well as cultural practices, not to speak of glorifying them.

Of late, many people of the Tiwa community, both male and female, are seen working in unorganized sectors as manual workers. Lack of interest in accepting new business for their economic development is also a factor of economic backwardness. But now a days, their outlook towards life and other things has changed. Boys and girls get themselves admitted in schools. Literacy rate is increased gradually. Young boys have shown interest in joining industrial work. Kin based economy is still going on in their society where women play an important role.

The economic problems of plain Tiwas are not different from the economic problems of the Indian peasantry in general. They have faced the problem of landlessness, land alienation, indebtedness, fragmentation of holdings, backward agricultural practices, flood so on and so forth. Among these, landlessness, flood and backward agricultural practices are the main problems encountered by them. During the field work it was observed that most of them have been engaging in cultivation on such land which is in fact owned by rich people. They take lease of the land for some years in return of
rent or products. This system is locally known as Adhi lowa or Adhi diya system where the farmers have to offer half of their production to the owner of the land. Frequent flood in Assam during the last two decades has also badly affected their economic condition. Some of them have even lost their agricultural land due to the land erosion in flood. Production rate is not too high due to the adherence to the age old agricultural practices. The number of some families who have adopted modern agricultural practices is quite negligible.

Their culture and economy bear a close relationship. Every kind of agricultural operation is associated with cultural and religious celebrations. Some of these practices incur large amount of expenditures. For example, they observe Jongkhong puja before starting agricultural work in the paddy field. It needs many sacrifices. Sometime it becomes hard for the poor families to meet the expenses of this kind of religious practices associated with agriculture. Because, presently the cost of a fully grown pig is Rs.7000/- or more. Nevertheless these traditions are still continuing along with other traditions like the continuity of periodical market known as Jonbil mela. This mela can be described as the living cultural heritage of Tiwa people. It has provided the example of maintaining continuity in their traditional practices. Existence of barter system in this mela is a good example of this fact. Relationship between culture and economy can be traced from the proverbs. The proverbial expressions of Assam provide good agricultural knowledge to the rural people and these can be considered as the first stage of agricultural science, because these proverbs bear practical knowledge of the agricultural field.

It can thus be concluded that the culture, economy and geographical environment are always interrelated. Geographical environment gives shape to the culture & economy of a particular group of people. Economy depends on the ideology of a group of people which is also a product of their cultural system. The economic activities, working attitude, food habit, and dress
pattern are depended on culture, religion and climatic condition. On the other hand, the economic development or economic conditions also have an impact on particular culture. Because the continuity of cultural tradition and cultivation of cultural practices depend on economic condition of the people. Hence, the relationship between culture and economy can be described as a two way process and both are influenced by each other as seen in the case of the Tiwas of Assam.
Notes:


2 D. N. Majumdar & T. N. Madan, An Introduction to Social Anthropology, 12th ed. (Noida: Mayoor Paperbacks, 1999), 162.


6 Ibid. 248.

7 Saiyad Abdul Malik, Rajor Mukhar Maat (Guwahati: Student Stores, 1988), 1.

8 Sarbeswar Rajguru, op.cit. 249.

9 Ibid. 250.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid. 251.

12 Ibid.

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Photo 39: Cultivation of Boro Paddy

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Photo 42: Modern tools of Agriculture

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