The presence of ‘tribes’ amongst us has always excited the curiosity of researchers. They are reminiscent of the early beginnings of mankind, as signified by a variety of epithets given to them, namely, the ‘Adivasi’ (the first settlers), ‘Adimjati’ (the original communities), etc. Mehta (1987) has rightly opined that each one of us, at one point of time or another, was once a ‘tribal’, having begun his initial journey as a food gatherer. In fact, during our march towards present day civilization, some sections of society moved much ahead of others, while some others could not keep pace and, therefore, lagged behind the mainstream. Their mode-of-production, unlike those of their more advanced brethren, continued to remain rudimentary, incipient or even outdated ---- indeed a far-cry from today’s cutting-edge technology! It is probably these indigenous people who, historically speaking, pre-dated the arrival of other groups and came to be known as tribes ---- named-subsequently as Scheduled Tribes in the Indian Context.

According to 2001 Census, the tribal population of India is estimated at 8.43 crore, forming 8.19 percent of its total population (cf. Statistical Outline 2009-10, DESHP: 179). After Africa, India has the largest tribal population in the world (Hasnain: 1991:197).

Himachal Pradesh emerged as an independent State on the map of India on Jan. 25, 1971. Its total Scheduled Tribe population throughout the State, stood at 1.47 lakh in 1971, and has now risen to 2.45 lakh (2001 Census). It forms 4.03 percent of the total population of Himachal Pradesh (60.78 lakh). However, it is merely 0.29 percent of the total tribal population of India. Here, it would be relevant to point out that so far as the total population of the Scheduled Areas of Himachal Pradesh is
concerned, it was estimated at 1.66 lakh (2001 Census), out of which 75.6 percent (1.26 lakh) are Scheduled Tribes. The entire population of Scheduled Areas is rural in character.

Immediately after Independence, the problem of tribal development has come into focus in the context of high priority accorded to social justice in the Five Year Plans. This goal (now subsumed under the latest slogan of inclusive growth) became more pronounced with the advent of Tribal Sub-Planning since the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards. Thus, 1974-75 became the watershed year in the history of tribal planning in India. The basic philosophy underlining the tribal development has been to bring the tribes on par with the national mainstream. Articles 38 and 46 of the Constitution were accordingly enunciated, enjoining upon the Government of the day to ensure a social order in the national life, while taking special care of the Scheduled Tribes in the process.

The Government of Himachal Pradesh accordingly made a provision of Rs. 9.05 crore for implementing the Tribal Sub-Plan during the period 1974-78. This outlay formed 5.75 percent of the total State’s plan outlay (157.4 crore rupees). Over the years since the Fifth Plan, the percentage share of Tribal Sub-Plan in total annual plan outlay of the State has risen to 9.0 percent, thus making a provision of Rs. 1,260 crore during the Eleventh Plan (2007-12). Henceforth, this ceiling of nine percent has been made mandatory by the Government of Himachal Pradesh.

However, what makes one to have a fresh look at the planning strategy is the fact that despite a Constitutional mandate and exclusive budgetary provisions for the uplift of the Scheduled Tribes, the percentage of families living below the Poverty Line has consistently
increased, notwithstanding the change in the criteria for identification of BPL families. It is in the context of such a scenario that the instant thesis proposes to raise a few posers viz.:-

(I) whether the gains of tribal planning have accrued to those disadvantaged sections of the society for whom these were initially intended?

(II) Whether the strategy for tribal planning does indeed need any reappraisal?

The present thesis is essentially a micro-level study of three purposively selected villages from tehsils Sangla and Moorang of ITDP-Kinnaur (the middle and upper Kinnaur respectively) spread over randomly selected 150 households, while keeping accessibility-to-road as the main parameter for studying ‘economic change’. In brief, this exercise is aimed at studying the ‘nature’ and ‘extent’ of economic change in terms of level, structure and disposal of total produce of sampled villages. At the centre-stage of study is the ITDP-cum-district Kinnaur, suddenly exposed to external stimulus soon after the Sino-India conflict of 1962.

In all, this study has been divided into six chapters.

CHAPTER- I. It attempts to highlight the geographical locale of ITDP Kinnaur. Besides giving a synoptic view of the tribal economy of Himachal Pradesh vis-à-vis the role of socio-economic constraints, it also deals with the demography of the region alongwith the special problems of the Scheduled Tribes and their habitat.
CHAPTER- II. While defining the tribes in the Indian context, it also traces the policy approaches of the Government and the consequent quest for integrating the tribes into the national mainstream.

CHAPTER- III. It summarily surveys the available literature on the subject, with a view to contextualizing the problem on hand.

CHAPTER- IV. It gives methodological details relating to the quantification of ‘economic change’.

CHAPTER- V. Forming the core of this research work, it has been devoted to the analysis and presentation of field data.

CHAPTER- VI. The Sixth and the last chapter is a summing-up of the main findings of this study and it also includes the policy recommendations emanating from this empirical study.