INTRODUCTION

BACKDROP TO THE PROBLEM

The instant thesis essentially aims at studying the ‘nature’ and ‘extent’ of economic change in the tribal economy of Kinnaur (H.P.) since 1950-51, in general, and since 1974-75, in particular. Until 1960s, the tribal economy of Himachal Pradesh had no more than a tangential interaction with the outside world—partly because the Inner Line restrictions regulated the entry of the non-tribals into the tribal areas; and, partly due to its forbidding terrain. In fact, the tribal areas of the State had been lying torpid for a long time, punctuated only by marginal interaction with the wider economy, provided by the annual Lavi Fair (celebrated at Rampur Bushahr since 1681 AD) or the occasional forays of highlanders into the neighbouring territory.

However, some pre-conditions for ‘change’ started creeping gradually into these hitherto staid areas when, owing to the proximity to Tibet, these areas became active overnight, soon after the Sino-India conflict of 1962. The large scale road-building activity happened to serve as the forerunner of ‘change’ with the entry of outside labour into these areas. The NH-22, thrown open for use during the Third Plan, served to convert some of the road-side villages into a hub of economic activity and thereby set in a chain-reaction.

In due course, the tribal economy got yet another stimulus when the Tribal Sub Plan was introduced in 1974-75, earmarking, in due course, nine percent of the State’s Plan-outlay for exclusive utilization for tribal areas. This is not to deny the earlier rumblings of change which came in with the introduction of Community Development Programme (enforced from 02 Oct 1952) and the Panchayat Raj Act, 1959. However,
what is intended to suggest is that certain historical accidents like large-scale road-building activity in the early sixties, coupled with some deliberate policy measures, set the backdrop for quick socio-economic change in the tribal economy. Besides, a wider market also started emerging on the scene, reinforced subsequently by the reorganisation of the States in 1966. All these factors combined to encourage: (I) different agro-climatic regions to specialize in different crops; (II) unhindered movement of farm produce all over the country, resulting into commercialization of agriculture; (III) free movement of inputs and outputs; (IV) introduction of a common monetary system with its consequent effect on traditional barter system; and (V) the co-ordination of economic policies among the member-states of the country.

This integration with wider economy resulted into better utilisation of given resources, leading, in turn, to higher growth rates. Such an impetus can come from:

1. strong economic incentives to adopt new methods of production;
2. the urge to replace obsolete equipment more rapidly; and
3. to innovate more rapidly with more and better investment.

However, besides these spread-effects, the backwash-effects also operate. The net impact can be on either side as the process of change admits of a variety of possibilities. The facts of ‘change’ demand a closer scrutiny for arriving at meaningful conclusions. The tribal economy of Himachal Pradesh did change; its pace, direction and fall-out, therefore, needed to be understood.
STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Since the introduction of Tribal Sub-Plan during Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78), the interest of the Government of Himachal Pradesh in tribal affairs is obvious from the fact that the annual flow of funds to Tribal-Sub-Plan soared up from 5.75 percent during the Fifth Plan to 9.00 percent during the subsequent plans. However, what makes one to look at the entire spectrum of tribal planning with a questioning-eye is the glaring fact that in spite of such a heavy investment over the years, the percentage of families living ‘Below the Poverty Line’ (BPL) has recorded an increase in the tribal areas. Notwithstanding other factors for rise in the percentage of BPL families, one still tends to ask with Narayan (1988) if our planning strategy has really gone awry, either in design or execution? He puts it so succinctly:-

“It is ironic that even after 42 years of Independence, the tribals continue to remain aloof from the general prosperity of the nation and are still in the lowest strata of society. They are still in the firm grip of a subsistence economy, and indebtedness is the hallmark of the tribal existence. Their way of living is still a challenge to the modern civilization and to the ingenuity of the planners”.

The research problem may be briefly worded as follows:

1. Is a tribal economy organised differently from a non-tribal economy?
2. Are there any specific variations in the organisation of a tribal economy as we come closer and closer to modern society or as we move from the hinterland to the mainland? In other words, the problem centres around understanding the ‘process of change’ being experienced by a typical tribal economy.

3. How the gains of development get distributed in the aftermath of economic change?

What prompted this field study was the curiosity of a researcher to understand the ‘process of change’ in the tribal areas. As is apparent from the preceding paragraphs, these areas have been in a state of transition ever since the process of planned/induced change got underway since the First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) onwards. Besides, the northwest regions of the Himalayas have certain area specific problems which have received little attention in academic literature. The compulsion for undertaking such a work stemmed from various apprehensions and impressionistic statements about the realities of ‘change’. The situation gets summed up in the following lines from T.S. Negi (1976):

“Since the traditional economy, more steady and self-sufficient in its humble patterns, is getting disturbed by a new economy, much more vulnerable to fluctuations, research is necessary to suggest reserves and buffers to absorb these shocks”.

Yet another factor which prompted this study was the two-year posting tenure of this researcher (1986-1987) in the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Kinnaur (HQ: Kalpa). It was but natural on his part to
enquire as to how the inmates of these far-flung hills who are pitted against innumerable natural calamities manage to eke out their living.

Further, in the face of benefits of science penetrating into the tribal areas (in the form of new technology, improved communications etc.), the interaction with the wider economy has grown manifold during the recent times. As a consequence of this, the tribals are now getting more involved and becoming more inter-dependent on the outside world. In short, ever since these land-locked areas got connected by roads (Kinnaur in early 1960’s, Lahaul in late sixties (1967), and Spiti in 1973), the government has persistently endeavoured to integrate the tribal communities into the mainstream. Therefore, a need for fresh and rigorous field work arose. In view of road-building serving as a fore-runner of change, it needs to be examined whether the resultant ‘change’ has confined itself to the roadside villages only, or has transmitted itself to the core of the tribal economy as well.

**FOCUS OF STUDY**

Although the Scheduled Tribes in Himachal Pradesh are scattered throughout the State, yet the present study is confined only to the Scheduled Areas of the Pradesh. Given the selection of a tehsil/sub-tehsil in a Scheduled Area, the present study aims at studying all the essential details of a village at the micro-level.

The study is also based on the assumption that area-specific and micro-level studies would provide a better comprehension of the genesis, carrier-agents and catalysts of the development-process. In fact, ever since the introduction of Tribal Sub-Plan in 1974-75 and consequent emphasis on the socio-economic development of the tribals, focus of the
The study has now shifted from sociological stance to an objective study of the impact of various welfare programmes on tribal development.

The scope of the study has further been restricted to probing into the economic aspects of the ‘tribes’, to the exclusion of sociological and anthropological aspects. It is premised that any change in social relations is largely initiated by changes in the economic environment, other forces playing only a contributory role in determining social configuration. Thus only ‘economic aspect’ has been chosen for this study, though bearing in mind all other aspects throughout. Those aspects which had no bearing on economic organisation were scrupulously left out in order to avoid needless digressions as well as to achieve correct perspective.

The entire exercise calls for:

(a) a clear perspective on development;
(b) selection of suitable indices thereof; and
(c) a search for socio-economic correlates of ‘change’.

This exercise would enable us to judge the past performance on the one hand and to suggest policy direction for the future, on the other hand.

The specific objectives are, however, summarized below:-

(I) to study the nature and extent of ‘change’ undergone by the tribal economy in terms of level, structure and spread of economic activity;
(II) to examine if a definite sequence or pattern of change is discernible in terms of locational advantages or otherwise?
(III) to identify the agents of change as well as to review the compatibility of the programmes and policies being implemented; and
(IV) to contemplate upon a suitable policy to bring about the desired change.