



Jhum Cultivation Is Cultural Occupation

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ABSTRACT

Historically, Maring tribe is a culturalist tribe in their entire aspect of life that has been lived in a hill country. They become accustomed to work on the slope land with wide range of techniques adapted customs and traditional elements of cultural patterns, that constitutes the whole living systems of Maring tribe. For them culture is one of the important identities of indigenous people. Culture cannot be compromised or sold out to scientific technologies. Their traditional modes of hunting, gathering and Jhumming continued in the newly defined domains, retaining their uniform dependence on human energy, simple tools, local materials and indigenous techniques. It was and is their culture. In fact the word culture comes from apiculture. Hence,

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INTRODUCTION

Jhum cultivation is not only the source of the livelihood but also the source of their culture, tradition and customary. Globalization has become opium at hand, melting the culture of hard labour in Maring land. The Indian Forest Act of 1927, which classifies forests including protected areas, excludes the forests of the North East, which are community controlled. These communities have maintained these forests to serve as fallows. However, the management of these forests and their custody has changed in more recent times because of policy. This includes the conversion of large forest areas into reserved forests or protected areas, changes in ownership of forestland, unsustainable logging and development of other land use systems, including the expansion of settled agriculture and cash crop plantations. Combined with population increase, all this has led to reduced availability of fallow forests and resulting reduction of the fallow phase in the shifting cultivation cycle.

The melodious song that tunes during harvest time, return to home when the sun set, processing to the field before sun rise has been sold. The culture of sharing has been diverted in hiring, Sharpening of the Maring Dao shifted to grinders and hence Jhum cultivation is in threat by the recommended scientific technology. Main cause of hunger is industrial agriculture globalised trade in food. Industrial agriculture creates hunger both by destroying the natural capital for producing food and locking the farmers into debt because of its high cost of production. Globalised trade creates hunger by diverting fertile lands for exports, promoting dumping and unleashing speculative forces. Industrial agriculture and globalisation also contribute 40% to green house gas emissions that are leading to climate change which in turn is agriculture and food security.

Traditionally, Jhumming Cultivation and Shifting Cultivation are commonly used as a synonym of slashing and burning method of cultivation, It has been indigenous and traditional method of

cultivation of the Marings of Manipur as well as all the tribal's in the world. Jhumming cultivation method is an integral farming system involving forestry, natural farming, sustainable agriculture and strong social organisation of the Marings. It brings strong bond of cultural setting and customary norms because of a village has hundred household there is suppose to be hundred numbers of Jhum field according to the number of the houses. Therefore, there is no beggar in the village, no one is homeless and no one dies by starvation

or famine because everyone has enough rice or paddy for one year till they get new rice. Everyone is compelled to cultivate for their livelihood and for survival through practice of

Jhumming cultivation. They don't care for any kind of blocked, strike and bandhs. The villagers use to stock food grains one year which they harvested through Jhum cultivation which is indispensable to human welfare to grow in all aspect of life according to the measure of the standard.

In my view, the most important step in mitigation and adaptation to climate change is to stop the assault on small farmers and indigenous communities to defend their right to their land territory and to see them not as remnants of our past but as the pathfinders for our future. We need to stop coercion to trade liberalisation and rewrite the rules of trade to favour the local. Ecological sustainability demands that every person, every community, every society has the freedom to create and defend economies that cause no harm to the climate and to other

people. Real solution will come out of breaking free the crippling world of mechanistic assumption, industrial methods of producing goods with high energy and resources costs and market mechanisms which make high-cost product appear cheap on supermarket shelves and it is the theological reflection of ecological sustainability in the light of Deuteronomic tradition. Therefore, any effort to find a solution to this vexed problem must involve the Jhumies and approach must Jhum centred.

Jhum Cultivation Towards Food Security Food

Security means that all people at all times have physical and economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods, which is produced in an environmentally sustainable and socially just manner, and that people are able to make informed decisions about their food choices. It also means that the people who produce food

are able to earn decent living wages by growing, catching, producing, processing, transporting, retailing, and serving food. It refers to secure ownership of resources and income earning activities, including reserves and assets to offset risk, ease shocks and meet contingencies. At the core of food security is the access to healthy food and optimal nutrition for all. Therefore, it is dependent on a healthy and sustainable food system. Traditional Maring economy ensured that no one ever goes hungry or dies of starvation and there are no beggars in Maring society. Everyone has their own house and field to work for their survival. In 2011 during 68 days economic blockade imposed by United Naga Council (UNC) in Manipur, the most affected groups of people were not the Jhum cultivators but urban dwellers only. No serious effect was felt in the villages as there was enough food available.

Marings are still predominantly shifting cultivation as their traditional way of occupation since time immemorial. They cultivate with love for their land, pride in their gardens and in a lone tradition of living off the land. They handle the land carefully and productivity in a long-term rotation sequence. Jhum cultivation is productive, thoroughly practical and stable, in tune with the physical environment and is not ruining its landscape. Land on the steep hills for almost one year only but it depends how they cultivate the rotation of the crops. In some region they use the plot for about three to five years by sowing different kinds of crops alternately. Needs for the shifting cultivation is being felt because there is no suitable substitute available in Maring land till today. They are spiritual cultivators and appear to be the most thriving by far of any of the hill tribes. Fields are placed on the hillsides without terrace but they drain them very indigenously. It is somehow like a small canal at least ten feet distance from each canal to save the soil erosion from the heavy rain. Village authority of the villages strictly prohibits the use of

any fertilizers and pesticides in Jhum cultivation. Thicker jungle yields the better crop. Maring use simple tools which are local made such as dao, sickle, axe, hoe, spade etc. Jhum cultivation method involves slashing and burning the vegetation, raising crops and then abandoning the plot to recover fertility for a number of years before bringing it under cultivation once again. It is the fulcrum of the life of Maring people, the sole source of survival and around this activity is woven Maring's customs, culture, measure of time, quantities and distances. It keeps them occupied for most of the year and determine their well-being and quality of life. In economic term such Jhumming cultivation is rather productive and it cannot be abolished without penalizing the level of the living villages.

It is a cropping system that permits a wide choice of physical sites to be utilized in term of both the major choice of physical attributes of the environmental region and with respect to the practice choices of garden sites. Jhumming cultivation are essentially pedestrians at the simpler level of operation and can walk or climb to almost any variety of surface site. It is culture and cultural history of the Maring tribe rather than physiographic which dictates the broad environmental location of Jhumming cultivation as cropping system. Free choice of any landform has been determined on the physical cultural criteria of soil, exposure, drainage, distance, locational relationships and animistic omens. Jhumming cultivation is one of the very oldest forms of agriculture practiced by humans. Its survival into the modern world suggests that it is a flexible and highly adaptive means of production.

Sustainability of Jhum Cultivation

The subsistence form of Jhum cultivation is based on common pool resources. Families have the customary right for getting some land allocation with the actual allocation, being done through annual lottery on village assembly. At high altitudes of north-eastern region of India, tribal people practice mixed cropping and intensive cultivation on steep hill slopes by clearing patches of forest land in a very primitive way. They neither employ machines nor animals. Rather they use human labour as the key input. Women predominantly participate in activities like seed selection, planting and weeding. While other activities such as clearing jungles and burning of the cut under growths are carried out by their counterparts. Both men and women participate in harvesting. Traditionally, a village community collectively owns, controls the land and decides on such rotational cultivation patterns. This practice is not simply a form of cultivation rather it is a way of life for traditional tribal societies which they have been practising from pre-historic times till today. It provides the local people a balanced diet and also offers some form of crop insurance to the Jhumias in the event of failure of some crops. It also helps to conserve forests as this pattern observes a long fallow period which is followed by a short cropping phase. Sustainability does not necessarily mean a share of Gross National Product (GNP) or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that contributes the largest population, but it still continues even it provides for a very large part of the population of the Maring tribe.

Jhum Cultivation and environment change:

The forests are destroyed by the seemingly inexorable advances of civilisation, industrialisation and warfare. The sort of advances that many of those who criticise shifting cultivators in the 19th Century thought are desirable and indicative of higher cultures. The same sort of processes is leading to the destruction of tropical forest in the last decade of the 20th century. So, advancement in civilisation is known as development which has

not resolved these problems. The problems are located not in the practice of a particular form of agriculture but within the fundamental relationships that human societies have with their environments. In complex developed economies these relationships have become very elaborate and are difficult to comprehend. However, in simple economies where agriculture is the major source of wealth creation, they can be easier to understand. A growing body of archaeological and

palynological evidence finds that simple human societies brought about extensive changes to their environments. It is seen before the establishment of any sort of state, feudal or capitalist and before the development of large-scale mining, smelting or shipbuilding industries. In these societies agriculture is the driving force in the economy and shifting cultivation was the most common type of agriculture practised. The relationships between social and economic change and agricultural change in these societies, insights can be gained on contemporary social and economic change and global environment change of shifting cultivation in those relationships.

Forests were exploited for ship building, urban development, and for manufacturing casks, pitch and charcoal more than being cleared for agriculture. Although, goat herding is singled out as an important cause of environmental degradation, a more important cause of forest destruction was the practice in some places of granting ownership rights to those who clear felled forests and brought the land into permanent cultivation. Darby states that, land had once been tilled became derelict and overgrown and cultivated land became forest. The other major cause of forest destruction in the Mediterranean environment with its hot dry summers were wild fires that became more common following human interference in the forests.

By the Middle Ages in Europe, large areas of forest were being cleared and converted into arable land in association with the development of feudal tenurial practices. From the 16th to the 18th centuries the demands of iron smelters for charcoal. Not only that there was an increase in industrial developments and the discovery and expansion of colonial empires as well as incessant warfare. That increased the demand for shipping to levels never previously reached all combined to deforest in Europe countries.

Many people cannot see the past clearing and burning of standing forest and do not perceive often ecologically stable cycles of cropping and fallowing. Nevertheless, shifting cultivation systems are particularly susceptible to rapid increase in population and to economic and social change in the larger world around them. The blame for the destruction of forest resources is often laid on shifting cultivators. But the forces bringing about the rapid loss of tropical forests at the end of the 20th century are the same forces that led to the destruction of the forests of Europe. It was all because of urbanization, industrialization and the application of latest technology to extract ever more resources from the environment in pursuit of political power by competing groups. Studies of small, isolated and pre-capitalist groups and their relationships with their environments suggest that the roots of the contemporary problem lie deep in human behavioural patterns. Even in these simple societies, competition and conflict can be identified as the main force driving them into contradiction with their environments.

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