

## PREFACE

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Issue of development in a region densely populated by tribal people assumed great significance in a country like India. Development demands not only development of all regions but even development of the whole region. Assam is located in the extreme North East corner of the country. The location and the demographic position demands special care and treatment both at the policy making and policy implementation level. This is the problem area for any development exercise. Geographic location of the tribal inhabited people of Assam offers a peculiar situation where a multi-dimensional development effort is needed to address the problem. In Assam, process of tribal development however, started very late. The tribal areas of Assam remained unaffected by progress till independence. After the independence, too, the policies were to maintain an utmost restraint or upset the tradition and culture of the tribal people. As a result developmental works were at a very low pace.

Assam is the home of different ethnic groups. The total population of Assam as per 2001 census is 2,66,55,528 out of which 33,08,570 is the tribal population which constitutes 12.41 percent of the total population of Assam. Assam maintains two scheduled tribe lists. One for the Autonomous Hill Districts of Assam called Hill Tribes and another for Plain Tribes of Assam. As per Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes order (Amended) Act 2002, Hill Tribes constitutes 15 communities and Plain Tribes constitutes 14 communities.

The Government of Assam has adopted a policy of integration of tribals with the mainstream aiming at developing a creative adjustment between the tribes and non tribes leading to a responsible partnership. By adopting the policy of integration or progressive acculturation the Government has laid the foundation for the uninhibited march of the tribals towards equality, upward mobility, and economic viability and assured proximity to the national mainstream. The Acts and Amendments passed by the Government of Assam for tribal development is committed on two courses of action in respect of Scheduled Tribes, viz

- Giving protection to their distinctive way of life.
- Protecting them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation and discrimination and bringing them at par with the rest of the nation so that they may be integrated with the national life.

In view of the plight of the tribals, various Acts and Amendments have been passed by the Government of Assam for improving the living conditions of the tribal population. These legislative actions are intended to cover agriculture, irrigation, animal husbandry, house sites, co-operative credit, education, health, distribution of essential articles etc. They also aim at protecting the interests of the tribals by providing them with a legal framework, and streamlining their development and raising their standard of living. Though various pieces of legislation have attempted by the Government to provide social and economical security to them, it is clear that the tribal population falls far behind the rest in all measures of the Human Development Index in demographic comparisons.

The study is an attempt to examine the various legislative enactments passed by the Assam Legislative Assembly for tribal development particularly since 2001. This study is an attempt to understand nature of continuity and discontinuity of tribal policies followed by the successive regimes in Assam and their impact and effectiveness in meeting the needs of tribal population and in uplifting their standards of living in Assam. Important rules, regulations, acts and amendments passed by Assam Legislative Assembly since 2001 are discussed here taking into consideration of earlier Acts and Amendments to understand continuity and discontinuity of the government policies and programmes towards tribal development.

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