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Study on Attitude Difference among the Indigenous Groups and Settlers on Forest and Forest Conservation in Bangladeshi Hill Tracts

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Abstract

The Indigenous people of Chittagong Hill Tracts are distinct and different from the majority Bengali population of Bangladesh in respect to race, language, culture, religion, and ethnicity. Their socio-economic condition, life style, culture and religion are influenced by the forest. This study identifies the attitudes of the indigenous people and settlers towards forest. This result compares attitudes difference of these two groups in terms of the forest resources utilisation and conservation. This study analyses indigenous peoples' daily forestry activities, socio-economic and cultural activities of CHT along with the dependence on forest for livelihood with a comparison to the settlers

Indigenous people are not only utilising forest product more than the Bengali Settlers but also possessing more knowledge on forest. The indigenous people are much more dependent on forestry activity for their livelihood where as the settlers are much more interested in timber business and agriculture. As a result the scope of livelihood opportunity for both indigenous people and Settlers are decreasing due to competition. In consequence, the conflict for recourse is increasing in the region resulting a gradual depletion of the rain forests of Chittagong Hill Tracts in terms of productivity and biodiversity through indiscriminate illegal logging, excessive minor forest product extraction. This study reveal that the settlers are more exploitive in comparison to the indigenous community and there is a difference among the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya and Khyang people in having dependency on forest. It is clear that they live in or around the forest they posses' different level of dependency on forest. It is shown that among the ethnic groups Khyang are more dependent than others and Chakma are less dependent on forest. It is a common belief that the indigenous people are more close to nature, How ever this study tries to analyse the attitude of the indigenous people of Bangladesh hill tracts when their society has been exposed to the comfort of modern civilisation. Where as, among the 5 major tribes Chakmas are more exploitative than other 4 (Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya and Khyang) tribes while Chakmas are more habituated with comfort and scopes modern civilisation.

Keywords: Atetude, indigenous people, nature conservation