UNIT 2 CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

Structure

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we have discussed the beliefs and worldview across many societies of the world. As mentioned these beliefs are important as they inform action and practices, what we called as customs. However unlike the popular conception, these customs are neither static nor rigid, most of them are informed by logic and rationality and serve to maintain a healthy human –environment relationship except when commercial and political interests intervene. A major source of conflict has arisen in the modern world when subsistence economies geared to the needs of local people are sought to being uprooted and replaced by exchange economies geared towards making cash profits and that too for mostly outside agencies. Very recently we are seeing the resistance put up by local people against the introduction of multinational companies into areas having a thriving local economy based on locally produced environmental resources. The people of Orissa are resisting the replacement of their well integrated economy based on betel leaf cultivation and prawn culture by the mega steel plant proposed by the Korean multinational POSCO. The agitation against the proposed mega thermal plant at Srikakulam (July 2010) is based on similar lines where a self-sufficient local economy and environmentally critical water bodies are sought to be uprooted to make way for an outside mega thermal plant project.

The rhetoric routinely put up by the power holders, both politicians and economists is that the local people are irrational and they illogically want to cling to their age old customs and do not want to have much desired change. However environmentalists have pointed to the huge environmental costs of such projects and also their adverse effects on the lifestyle and human rights of the local people who inevitably get marginalized and land up either as landless migrants feeding the labour force in the cities or as bottom line poorly paid workers in the same projects.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- comprehend the rationality of customs and traditions;
- recognize the importance of traditional social organisations in the process of sustainability; and
- explain the value of local knowledge and customs in the process of modernisation.

2.2 RELEVANCE OF TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS

One of the seminal works was done by Roy Rappaport (1968), on the role of rituals in maintaining ecosystemic balance among horticultural people in the New Guineas. This study transformed the way rituals were approached as a part of religion and as a way of dealing with the supernatural to do something that regulated food supply and led to a sustainable balance of cultural and environmental variables. This approach known as ecosystem approach introduced the concepts of negative feedback and systems into the study of human environment relationships.

Rappaport used this theory to study the role of rituals among a Maring speaking people, the Tsembaga, living in the interiors of New Guinea, in his classic book, *Pigs For Our Ancestors* (1968). He showed how the ritual sacrifices of pigs in their annual rituals, led to a regulation of relationship between the humans, and the non-humans. "To be more specific, this regulation helps to maintain the biotic communities existing within their territories, redistributes land among people and people over land, and limits the frequency of fighting." (Rappaport 2008:254).

Since the communities are not integrated under any higher political body the rituals help to integrate them and form allies for fighting as well as distributes surplus pig meat to a larger population, each community being assured by the cyclical rotation of these rituals to have a supply of high quality protein when they need it most, that is at the time of warfare; as the pig sacrifice rituals coincide with the feuding. The Tsembaga, at the time of their study were a small population of only about 200 people, with little contact with the outside world. They are thus taken as a typical case of a preliterate community who maintained a close interaction with the natural environment. Rapport has referred to this small group as an ecological population that is "as one of the components of a system of trophic exchanges taking place within a bounded area" (Rappaport 2008: 255). The Tsembaga along with their biotic environment have been considered as an ecosystem. However since the Tsembaga maintain a gene flow by intermarriage with other groups in the vicinity and also engage in exchange of material goods with them, it is considered that these larger aggregate is like a 'population' in the sense that this term is used by geneticists, that is as "an aggregate of inbreeding organisms persisting through an indefinite number of generations and either living or capable of living in isolation from similar aggregates of the same species" (ibid: 256).

The Tsembaga practiced shifting cultivation and grew a variety of tubers and yams, sugar cane, sweet potatoes and large variety of greens. The record kept by

the researcher indicates a daily intake of 2,600 calories by men and 2,200 calories by women both of whom are of short stature and slight built. This indicates a good intake although 99 percent of their intake was of vegetable and Rappaport is of the opinion that the Tsembaga achieve nitrogen balance at a low level or have reduced protein intake. It was found that between 0.15 and 0.19 acres of land was cultivated to feed each person, per year and fallow periods for shifting the plots varied from 8 to 45 years, so that the secondary forests on the fallow fields were about 1000 acres. Along with their cultivation the Tsembaga keep pigs that are reared by the women, and kept in pens in the secondary forests. The pigs are allowed once the secondary forest trees are large enough not to be damaged by their rooting that incidentally also keeps the soil loose and free of excessive vegetation making it easier for them to replant them. The pigs thus act both as scavengers picking up garbage and as cultivating machines.

The people never kill their pigs under normal circumstances but only sacrifice them if someone is ill or kill them ritually at the ancestor worship rituals known as Kaiko, which accompanies the beginning of warfare with a neighbouring group, with whom they may be having marriage relationships. The Kaiko usually signals that the combined human and pig population has become too high to be sustainable. The pigs are fed with sub-standard tubers and household wastes and the amount they eat is almost equal to that of a human, but when their numbers become too large they need to be fed on tubers especially grown for them as waste food is no longer sufficient. Since women produce food and feed the pigs it puts extra burden on them. The increase in size of a pig herd also signals an increase in human population as no pigs would have been sacrificed for a long time, if no one was ill or dying. The pig population is kept low by castrating all juvenile male pigs and the new pigs are born of domestic females and feral males. This keeps the growth rate very low and it takes a long time for the human and pig population to grow large enough to cause such disturbances that a war becomes imminent. If pigs grow in numbers the skirmishes involving pigs straying into growing gardens increases and daily fights take place between neighbours till some of them begin to move out of the territory and women begin to press for a Kaiko.

The Kaiko is a ritual that signals that the peace stones and the Rumbim that was planted at the time of the last truce can now be uprooted and a new cycle of warfare may begin. With the uprooting of the Kaiko that is nothing but a ritual pole with the fighting stones tied to it, the pigs are killed. Almost all adult and juvenile pigs are killed and the meat is eaten by the men who go to war and distributed among the allies who help them in the fighting. Thus by participating in a Kaiko, people acknowledge that they have now become part of that particular group. The fighting is always regulated and few casualties ever take place. The fighters are afraid of the spirits of the dead and limit them to as few as possible. Also the practice of not drinking water but eating pig fat with a lot of salt makes the warriors too thirsty to fight for too long. The main effect of the fight is the killing of surplus pigs and the distribution of the meat to a large population, supplementing them with the protein normally missing from their diet. Also they get it at the time they need it most, that is at the time of bodily stress. Even during peace the pigs are sacrificed at the time of illness that is when the body requires extra nutrition and often this high protein intake may make the ill person better and also help the family members to cope with the stress of looking after someone who is sick.

When there are no more pigs to be sacrificed the fighting is called off as it is dangerous to fight without making offerings to ancestors. There might be a truce or one group that is the loser may go off their territory in which case the victors go into the territory and kill all the remaining pigs and destroy houses and field but they do not occupy the territory for fear of the ancestors of the people who have left. The Rumbim is planted and the fighting stones put up to appease the ancestors and for this some taboos are still in place. These include taboos on dancing (major source of courtship), eating wild marsupials and rodents. The people who had fled join other groups and begin to offer sacrifices with them. Over a period of time when the victors feel that all ancestors would have left, they occupy the new fallow land and plant the Rumbim. One effect of this waiting period is to allow the land to come back to normal fertility. The Rumbim is uprooted only when the next Kaiko cycle begins (One Kaiko cycle usually lasts a year, when pigs are sacrificed and sporadic fighting takes place). Once the Rumbim is planted normal activities like dancing and getting married takes place and food intake resumes that includes widely occurring small animals.

Let us now examine the rationality of sustainability in this entire ritual cycle. Firstly the population of pigs acts as a regulatory mechanism to control the population of humans and serves to redistribute this population in a more sustainable manner, from an area of high congestion to areas of lower congestion. The stress leading to fights begins because of high population density of humans and pigs that is interrelated. It allows the wild species to recover their populations because of the long periods of taboos. It helps form new alliances between groups and also provides supplemental high protein intake in a population normally suffering from protein deficiency. This is only one of the examples of rituals providing ecologically sound rationale to promote sustainability. One may also take the example of concept of sacred groves that have served to preserve many species of plants and also prevent natural disasters like land erosion and storms. Marvin Harris has analyzed the concept of sacred cow in India in light of the economic rationality of not eating an animal that is the back bone of the agricultural economy besides providing food in terms of milk and milk products. According to Harris, if there was no ban on cow slaughter at times of famine people would have eaten too many cows thus being left with no bulls for traction at the end of the famine and also having no animals for manure and other benefits provided by the cow.

No doubt as we have seen in the case of the river Ganga sometimes, traditional customs such as the immersion of idols in the river may lead to pollution. But if we examine this custom a little more closely we find that in the times when these were prevalent or originated, the population was low. In the villages, the Durga Puja used to take place only in one house namely that of the Zamindar. Sometimes there was one Puja among several villages as not all households even of Zamindars had the sanction to perform Puja. Also the idols were always made of clay and biodegradable materials like cane and bamboo. The idols were usually decorated with real jewelry that was taken off before immersion. Thus the load on the river was minimal. But in the urban situation and with increasing population, now hundreds of idols are immersed , also they are painted with toxic chemical paints rather than the natural dyes used earlier and tinsel decorations add to the pollution. Thus a custom that may not have been environmentally toxic can become so in changed circumstances. Therefore there is always need for revision and reinvention of customs.

2.3 TRADITIONAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Besides rituals and religion, kinship and especially kinship groups have played key roles in management and sustenance of resources. Shifting cultivators for example hold land by clans and kinship groups where the individuals only have rights of user and not of possession. Thus as large tracts of land lie fallow, they need to be protected collectively and it is not possible for individual households to look after and protect so much land. Individual households are given land according to their needs at the beginning of each cultivation cycle that may be done by a shaman or a priest or a clan elder. It is the same case with pastoral communities where again rights of user to pastures and water bodies are often held by communities based on either kinship or village settlements. Thus while individual households may own their flocks, the access to what may be called 'abstract property' is vested in the collectivity.

The social organization based on some principles of common ownership and access to resources is found among people with a mode of subsistence that has a large resource base and less population density. These apply to resources such as water bodies, forests, grazing land and shifting cultivating land where only a fraction of the land is under cultivation at any time. The collective responsibility allows for greater management and also for the equitable circulation of resources with least possible wastage. Thus in shifting cultivation each household gets land according to its needs. Thus there is no problem of surplus at one unit and less than subsistence at another. For pastoral communities also precious resources like water and grazing grounds are equitably accessible to all with hereditary rights.

Describing access to scarce water resources in the Kalahari, Polly Weissner (1982) has shown how kinship relationships allow for a degree of security to individuals providing them with several options in case one option fails. Thus unlike in agricultural communities where land is usually handed over individual households and follows only one line of descent that is either through father or mother , rights to the n!ore, or a food and water resource locality that can sustain at least one band throughout the year are spread all across the Kalahari inhabited by the Bushmen. In the present day context, in addition to food and water the n!ore gives access to wage labour, opportunities for marketing crafts, schools clinics, etc. (Weissner 1982: 62-63). Each person gets rights to one n!ore from their father and one from their mother. During the course of their lifetime a person gets strong rights in the n!ore they live in and maintain weak rights in one they have inherited but do not live in. The rights to the strong n!ore are passed on to the children. However a person can also live in the n!ore of a spouse and subsequently get a right over it. In case a n!ore is left uninhabited then others can negotiate rights to live in it from those who hold it weakly. Thus a person has many options to access resources that are critical to survival yet there is the provision of equitable distribution inbuilt into the system. Thus the system of flexible distribution avoids overload and at the same time secures adequate resources for everyone.

One of the most remarkable feature of social organizations that makes sustainable and extremely efficient use of the precious resource of water for wet rice cultivation is the Subak of Indonesia described by Clifford Geertz. The Subak is

an organization made only for irrigation and has a complex structure that involves the provision and distribution of water, timing of the cultivation activities and ensuring an efficient use of resources. A Subak consists of all the rice terraces irrigated from a single major water canal that runs down the slope of a volcanic mountain and has its origin in a mud and stone river dam. The Subak functions as a corporate body that has access to the dam and the canal, the tunnels and aquaducts and reservoirs used for running water down from the hills into the fields. The Subak is a spatial domain and all people who use it to irrigate their fields in that bounded area are its members. A large land owner can be the member of more than one Subak and membership is independent of caste, kinship, village membership and class. Thus the Subak is a corporate organization specifically created to manage irrigation, both technologically and socially and also has religious aspects that are integrated into its technological and social dimensions. The main canal coming down from the dam is divided into two canals by bamboo water dividers; and this process is repeated five or six times till the water reaches the fields in large numbers of narrow streams. This multiple divisions by which water is channeled into narrower canals are fixed and allows for very little adjustment. It is actually written down in palm leaf Subak Constitution and is a formal dictate. The ultimate result is that the final openings provide exactly the same amount of water supply.

The productive activities on the individual fields are carried on by individual owners in their own capacity, independently of each other but the timing is coordinated such that every field in a Subak must be planted at the same time. The entire technical task of the Subak is collectively carried out by its members, in work groups that attend to various layers of the Subak and the size of these groups varies accordingly. This entire system has at its apex the Subak chief who is an elected office bearer and who presides over the Subak council which is comprised of all the members each having a single vote irrespective of the size of their holdings. The Subak can take away a man's land if he does not comply with the Subak regulations. The Subak council also arranges for all the Subak rituals and gets priests to perform the rituals that mark every stage of cultivation. However in spite of these regulations and norms, the actual cultivation and marketing is done individually and not all members are of equal economic standing. The regulation of water is done through the elaborate rituals that involve a rice goddess cult. The various ceremonies that have their own temples, priests and rituals nevertheless regulate the cultivation into a systemic rhythm. The overall ritual has nine stages and takes place concurrently at all the levels. These are 1) water opening 2) terrace opening 3) planting 4) purifying the water 5) feeding the gods with holy water and other offerings 6) budding of the rice plants 7) growth of the rice 8) harvesting and 9) storing the rice. Now the first of these ceremonies is staggered in such a way that it is the highest terrace that begins the cycle and the lowest does it at the end, so that while the highest is harvesting and storing its grains, the lowest may be planting. Thus the water comes down step by step and everyone gets it equally.

As Geertz explains it, the water is regulated in such a way that while one is making maximum use of it, the others are at various stages of using water, and the entire water system is not taxed simultaneously. This not only increases the efficiency of production but leads to a highly sustainable system that is able to maintain itself year after year , without reducing productivity and also ensuring a democratic and just distribution of resources.

Thus we find that in many societies of the world, customs and even rituals have played key role in human environment interactions and at times given rise to highly efficient and sustainable systems of environmental regulation and management. Such systems however are usually delicately balanced and may be destroyed if interfered with or if under attack from outside forces. Most of the time such outside forces manifest themselves in the form of laws that are meant only for the power holders and not for the local people. The fine ecological balances that the local communities may have created over generations are usually disrupted and the people lose their subsistence base.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit

1) What are customs? Are they static? Explain with examples.

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2) How can a traditional custom contribute to the maintenance of an ecosystem? Elaborate.

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2.4 RESOURCE CONFLICTS

One of the major sources of conflicts has been the takeover of communal lands and resources by the state, most of which had happened during colonial times. The attempts to replace a subsistence economy or a local system of exchange by a market based economy and integration into global economy has also given rise to conflicts. Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha (1995) have reported how in the Dharwar district of Southern Karnataka, villagers uprooted eucalyptus saplings and replaced them with locally useful plants. The incidence that took place on 14th Nov, 1987, was in protest against the allotment of common village land to a polyfibre unit that wanted to grow commercially useful eucalyptus trees on it. The villagers were protesting peacefully, yet forcefully to indicate that the village commons were not meant for commercial exploitation but for the good of the village people.

In a similar way Chipko activists in Himachal Pradesh uprooted 7000 eucalyptus saplings for a forest nursery in Chamba District and planted locally useful broad leaved trees instead. All over the hills local NGOs and activists are continually resisting the planting of commercial conifers and want to promote the retention of natural forests and broad leaved trees like *banj*. Some of the most controversial projects have been the building of mega dams that submerge large tracts of valuable forest land and biodiversity as well as play havoc with people's social and cultural lives. The world view of land as a landscape of memories and inscribed values such as spiritual, social and personalized sentiments are increasingly being viewed as irreplaceable and impossible to value in terms of money.

The personal costs of development are increasingly being brought to the forefront in the past three decades or so ever since real opposition to the Tehri dam project began and as the Narmada agitation acquired international proportions. Guha and Gadgil (1995) have recorded one of the earliest and less known agitations against building of a dam that took place in the years following World War 1, in the Sahyadri hills in western India. This refers to an ambitious project of the industrial house of Tatas to build a series of dams on the Sahyadri hills. The first dam built near Lonavala just acquired land from peasants without giving them any compensation. The next one was planned near Mulshi, close to Pune, a centre of the Indian freedom Movement. A peasant objected to a trench being dug on his field and a British engineer, brandished a revolver at him. The issue took on nationalist proportions and Senapati Bapat, a young congress leader led an agitation that halted the dam for a year.

The Tatas were then directed to acquire land from the peasants by paying compensation. Here the situation became similar to what was much later faced in Singur in West Bengal. While the upper caste Brahmin landlords were in favour of giving up the land in lieu of monetary compensation, the peasants were reluctant to give up their only source of income. Also like most peasants their attachment too went beyond commercial interests, they considered the land as their way of life. However unlike in Singur, the Tatas were able to push through the deal with the then British government and the compensation went to the landlords and the actual tillers were left high and dry. The only positive outcome was that the Tatas dropped other projects meant for the Sahyadri hills. However interesting issues related to development were raised at this time and have been repeatedly echoed in many projects undertaken later.

The rhetoric that the dam projects were of national interest and was visualized keeping a western model in front wherein requirements of electricity and power were mostly meant for urban and elitist areas. For the Mulshi Peta dam the advantages listed included the saving of large amounts of coal, transportation of coal, the divergence of water for agricultural purposes after its use for generating electricity and generating work for labourers. The rationale has been that people displaced from agriculture will become available as labour on these projects. However, the collapse of the displaced people's entire life style, their rituals and religion and their social organizations were completely overlooked. The displacement rhetoric takes a mechanistic view of humanity depriving it of its cultural and social values and the richness of its lifestyle. Also the environmental costs and effectiveness of the projects are often overlooked as it was done for the Tehri dam project that is an environmental as well as an engineering disaster,

besides hitting at the roots of Hindu religious sentiments by damming the river Ganga.

2.5 THE COAST, THE RIVER AND THE FISHERMEN

While a lot of focus has been centered on forests and mountains the coasts were relatively less studied in terms of environmental impact till the incidents of tsunami and the Gulf oil spill took place. The fishermen, like the peasants, have a lifestyle that revolves around the sea and have rich cultural traditions involving it. The coast is however increasingly under threat, the coastal wetlands and the natural foliage of mangroves and coastal fauna and flora is being destroyed by indiscriminate tourism and urban development that have removed mangroves and built hotels and artificial structures. The industries are releasing effluents that enter the sea through the rivers. The fishing on large rivers has also been affected by changes in the ecosystem. The Gangetic dolphin is now a threatened species and so are the Olive Ridley turtles on the Orissa coast. An imminent threat to the fish reproduction and the lives of the traditional fishermen has been the commercial fishing using trawlers which are destroying the nesting and eggs of the fish and severely damaging their reproduction. The traditional fishermen on the Kerala coast have been agitating against this intrusion into their lives by commercial fishing that is posing a threat to the environment that was so sustainably used by the traditional fisher folk. Fishing trawlers are interested only in maximizing their catch and all over the world commercial fishing is now threatening the survival of popular species of fish like the Tuna.

Studies across the world by scholars have shown that traditional fisheries have their culturally conserved "resource conserving management that are not informed by Western Science" (Knudsen2009: 5). Howsoever sustainable such techniques were, in the post world war period, globally a whole new set of technologies were introduced that include, "monofilament/nylon nets, fishmeal technology and electronic fish finders" (ibid:127). Describing new fishing technologies introduced on coastal Turkey, Knudsen writes, "Around 1960 the first echo sounders were imported and the fishers became less dependent upon weather and light conditions. All these innovations facilitated more continual fishing. The teams started to use special carrier vessels that would take the catch ashore while the main vessel continued fishing operations. When the fishers were allowed to use radiotelephones and coast radio during the later part of the 1970s, communication between the mother vessel and the carriers, between the teams and their contacts ashore was made much easier. In the 1970s the introduction of the power block, the fish pump as well as radar , the adoption around 1980 of the fish sonar, and in the early 1990s the legalization of GPS guided map systems, further increased catch capacity"(ibid).

However all this one sided investment into catching fish had the inevitable result, by 1989, there was a resource crisis, the volume of fish went down dramatically. The vision in Turkey was totally influenced by western models and the state repeatedly attempted to introduce fisher's cooperatives on the lines of western countries. Unlike a grass root level effort, the organization of cooperatives in Turkey was a top down effort initiated by the bureaucracy and modeled totally on the west and were largely oriented towards introducing western technology

into fishing. As Knudsen (2009:195) describes "during one phase cooperatives were also seen as important to bringing the organizational structure in the Turkish fisheries in line with the cooperative structure which prevails in EU in order to ease future Turkish entry into the Union". Since it did not integrate with local customs the cooperatives failed totally to achieve what they were intended to do. Very few actual fishermen were members of any cooperative and were not part of running them. Most claimed that the cooperatives were 'empty' or of no use to the small boat owners and were run by the rich big boat owners.

The small boat owners on the other hand are having their own informal organizations such as having an alarm system to warn them when they are engaged in illegal sea-snail dredging. They do not form organized groups but rather shifting clusters that work on an opportunistic basis. They try to hide their information from others rather than sharing them as resources are limited. For example if they make good catch they try to keep it a secret. Sometimes small boat owners felt that they lacked a leader and could not handle their affairs more systematically. They are more comfortable with vertical rather than horizontal relationships. Trust is invested in local rich patrons and influential local leaders who are seen as 'friends'. Trust does not vest with cooperatives whose leaders are usually seen as corrupt as siphoning away collective resources. Thus if they look for a leader from among them that person is powerless in the hierarchical system, and if he belongs to the elite then they may not be able to trust him. The small boat owners along the Black sea coast studies by Knudsen do not form any one homogenous community and they are more drawn to their other relationships with higher status patrons. In 2005 only about ten percent of fishers were members of any cooperatives. In the general neoliberal political atmosphere of the country, cooperatives were often stigmatized as 'communist'. The official view on failure of cooperatives is stereotypical and based on a negative construction of the fishers as uneducated, '*cahil*'(unsophisticated), irrational and so on. The *mahalle* (association) norms based on Islam, more compatible with the organizing of fishers were perceived as regressive. The rejection of western models by the fishers was seen as their ignorance.

All this indicates an official ignorance of the real customs of the fishermen, and also the official rejection or reluctance to know these customs as the officials were totally driven by the western models. They idealized the techniques and organization of big boat fishing mostly in the corporate sector and ignored the small boat fishers altogether. This is in great contrast to Japan where folk models have been given great importance and led to much more successful development of fishing cooperatives. "While fishery policy had clear parallels in Japan and the Ottoman empire, traditional privileges and rights, unlike development in Turkey, were incorporated in the first Japanese Fishery Law (1901) and sustained in modified form in the second Fishery Law (1949). The laws upheld to a large extent the coastal communities' privileged access to fish in their immediate coastal territories. Fishing cooperatives were allocated substantial responsibility and authority in the management of "fishing rights" (ibid: 208)

Thus we see that the contrast between Japan and Turkey in the same area of fishing is starkly evident. Where local customs have been respected and incorporated, the success story is there for everyone to see. Japan has always set its own goals of modernization based on its own customs. Turkey like many other countries including India has unsuccessfully tried to impose western models

from the top ignoring local customs that have their own story of sustainability. This clearly indicates that successful development needs to follow more folk models. The rhetoric that local people have no sense and are irrational has its echo in many manmade environmental and development disasters. It is also difficult to break long standing practices like family based fishing that continues even today in Turkey and is even achieving a degree of success and proved its resilience in the face of state opposition.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit

1) What kind of conflict arises when traditional life ways are sought to be uprooted?

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2) What are the advantages and disadvantage of new fishing techniques?

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

- Every community or people in their long standing relationships with the environment have developed a set of social organizational principles and norms that pass for culture and tradition.
- The success story of sustainable modernization is not to try to erode every strand of such customary structures especially as they have withstood the test of time.
- The end of the twentieth century has seen too many human caused disasters for any country or state to push through such irrational projects of development. Yet we see that it is still happening and also right at our door steps.
- Collective action and conflict has been able to divert or dilute some of them but scholarly attention needs to be given more rigorously to such notions of customs and traditions.

- The top down approach to administration and the attitude of elitist groups in power towards dismissal of all things local as ignorance is what has been wrong with the concept of development as practiced in much of the third world.

- What the West has already rejected, like the building of mega dams is now being incorporated into the developing countries. What is being accepted globally as indigenous knowledge is still being rejected in India as superstition.

- For our future sustainability we need to introspect more on what are the gains of building up from what we already have rather than trying to destroy everything and then beginning again, often when it is too late to do so.

2.7 KEY WORDS

Customs : A custom is any activity which lots of people do, and have been doing it for a long period of time

Traditions : A tradition is a belief or behavior passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past

Resource Conflicts : The situation when more than one individuals or groups are competing to use similar set of resources.

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2.9 KEY TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) Your answer must include the following points
   - Practices based on beliefs and ideas.
   - Dynamic
   - Isembage victuals
2) Your answer must include the following points
   - Beliefs and victuals help in the integration and regulation of the population.
   - Exchange of energy level between human and animals.
   - Koiko helps to keep a sustainable population.
   - Pigs act as a regulatory mechanism in controlling human population.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Your answer must include the following points
   - Peaceful protest in support of village commons.
   - Resistance over the commercial plantation by local people.
   - Displacement
2) Your answer must include the following points
   - Maximum catch.
   - Less dependency on weather and light
   - Reduction in the fish volume.
   - Loss of trust and security.