Understanding Tribal Life and Livelihood in Changing Times: A Study on the Puroiks of Arunachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT The life and livelihood of a community are the inter-connected entity that is bind together with material and immaterial forces. In latter's sense, life is a gift of the nature having spiritual quality as how the human being perceives about the world around in multiple ways. On the other hand, livelihood constitute as an indispensable component of daily life of the human being. From the economic viewpoint, means of earning livelihood hitherto, depend on accessibility of economic resources. Besides, social, cultural, and religious activities also contribute in the maintenance of livelihood. The Puroiks [erstwhile called as Sulungs] with a population of around 7000 (2011 Census) is one of the indigenous and traditional tribes of Arunachal Pradesh who have been identified as a slave tribe. Empirical evidences suggest them as socially, economically, and educationally backward which resulted mainly due to exploitation. The very inhumane practice of slavery, though it was officially banned since 1976, is reportedly still existing in different parts of the state. Owing to this, the overall livelihood of the Puroiks is severely affected. They are deprived of the privileges that is rightfully entitled and endowed by laws. The present study attempts to explore the occupational nature of the Puroiks; to understand the livelihood pattern in relation to their social well-being; and to suggest some measures to mitigate the problems faced by the people in their daily struggle for survival. An attempt is also made to enhance the level of consciousness and awareness among Puroiks about their rights and privileges, to generate confidence and inspire them the ideas of modernity. Data are collected mainly from the primary sources by employing open-ended interview schedule and focus group discussion with the community people. For secondary sources, the published literature like books, journals, magazines, etc. were consulted.

Keywords: Livelihood, Puroiks, Well-Being, Welfare, Slave, Backward, Modernity.

I. Introduction
The “Puroik” is one of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, to whom; so far, the larger community use to call as “Sulung”. The former one is an official term, while the later one is perceived as derogatory in nature which denotes a slave or the social group of servitude tasks. The Puroik is an aboriginal sub-tribe of Tani group (Animist) which now centrally inhabited in two districts of the state viz. East Kameng & Kurung Kumey. They are also found in some pockets of Papum Pare, Upper Subansiri & Lower Subansiri districts. Puroik (previously Sulung) is the official name of a tribe and a group of languages and dialects spoken in five districts of Arunachal Pradesh (Lieberherr, 2015: 235).

According to 2011 census, the total population of the Puroik was roughly estimated to be 7000, but as per the latest report their total population is 4,554 out of which male comprises 2,373 while women has 2,181, (Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India, 2013). They are generally known by their age-old occupation of producing flour from sago palm trees and just survived through it. It is their main occupation to meet their bare minimum requirement of food for sustainability only (Pertin, 2010). This practice bears a unique identity of this community. Nuclear family unit is prevalent in the community basing on the set up of patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal system making the father a central figure and economically too, they are in miserable & pitiful condition (Pertin, 2010). They drew their sources of livelihood exclusively from the forest things & species. The main festival of Puroik community is Gumkum-Gumpa celebrated every year on 15th April, celebrated for peace and prosperity. During the festival, they also showcase their traditional and cultural heritage to other people. They follow Donyi-Polo, the local religious belief but in recent past, many of Puroiks have converted to Christianity.

II. Rationale of the Study
The rationale behind the choosing of this theme is to understand the living condition in real life and know the current status and changing trends in livelihood pattern, occupational nature, social institution and other concerns of the Puroik community. The study will focus mainly on social, economic, cultural and political aspects in the life of the Puroiks. Being a learner and the first-timer entrant to the research world, this study is an attempt of the researcher to enhance the level of consciousness and awareness among Puroiks about their rights & privileges, to generate confidence and develop ideas of modernity. The researcher is intended to conduct the study based on socio-economic perspective as how the people
manage their livelihood of daily affairs in terms of occupation they maintained. The study will be carried out with qualitative approach focussing on the existing life conditions, challenges and hurdles in their efforts to live with dignity and worthiness. It will also draw the historical approach in order to assess and acknowledge the ancestral stocks of social norms, cultural values and customs of the community. The later approach will be employed with an aim to reveal their real socio-cultural life (tradition, custom, language, other community identities).

III. Review of Literature

Luthra (1971) discussed about the prospect of administrative policy for the overall socio-economic and administrative development of the region (i.e. NEFA-now Arunachal Pradesh). He opined that until & unless the responsible government is taking initiatives to modernise the primitive societies the very notion of democracy would be remained vague. It is obvious that Luthra’s view could be seen as harbinger for future India by underpinning the unorganised grassroots levels through comprehensive developmental planning & policies.

Pertin (2010) cited about the miserable & pitiful life condition of the Puroiks. He perceived that Puroiks are not only a slave for their masters but at the same time they are also a master for themselves. It means Puroiks are being treated as slaves. They have no absolute freedom or autonomy to discharge activities on their own wish unless the master permits to do so. As far as the survival needs is concerned, the Puroiks manage and maintained their livelihood for one’s own family as well besides working for their masters. He concluded with an opinion that it needs for full support from the government to free them from such bondage and raised them up from stigmas & poverty condition of life that would be helpful to turned-up their economic condition at par with other tribes.

Sonam (2016) found that the level of awareness about political activities, rights and privileges among the Puroiks is very minimal owe to live a destitute life. The study has revealed that by taking advantages of their poor and ignorance Puroiks were subject to ‘bonded slaves and was fully dominated over the day to day economic and political affairs by its neighbouring tribes, particularly the Nyishis and Sajolangs (Mijis). They are extremely backward in terms of political and social motivations; consequently, they failed to participate in political activities and in this connection their exclusion and neglect in such activities might due to their slave origin’. One can imagine as how strength they coped with the ordeals they have been facing over the long period of times. As the political institution emerges as the important means of controlling the economy in present trends rather than fostering universal freedom and equality, the unscrupulous mindset of people reflects in their hand and glove practice. Ultimately, the community is compelled to render helpless all the time.

The Global Slavery Index Report (2016) has founded that nearly 46 million people are still trapped in modern slavery globally, out of which India spotted to be having the highest number of slave comprising of 18.35 million. The report refers the Modern Slavery as “to situations of exploitation that a person cannot leave because of threats, violence, and coercion, abuse of power or deception”. This finding helps in understanding the way how the people treat one’s fellow citizens. Out of numerous slavery factors as per this report, Bonded Labour is one of the greatest concerns under which the suppressed are being not properly treating. It totally violates the nature’s gift human rights to self-occupation, decision, determination. etc.

Ramya (2017) while dealing with the changing livelihood patterns of the Puroiks mentioned that hunting and gathering are people’s major source of livelihood. However, he found that lot of issues are being affect their traditional livelihood. Though they are try to hold on to their profession but poor socio-economical condition compels them to change their traditional way of earning. Some external and internal social, economic, and environmental pressures are responsible for this change. At the same time, new generation does not give any positive response in favour of this profession. So, the tendency is very clear that it will change in near future.

Looking at the above available literature on Puroiks, the study concludes the reviewed literature as follows:

The most prominent issue is keeping as slave. Though it was officially abolished by the government through the Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act, 1976 the trend of master ship is still prevalent in some pockets. It makes their life miserable and pathetic. At the cost of service to the master, the Puroiks lost their worth and dignity which is a matter of grave concern. Consequently, they fail to improve and acquire basic skills to protect themselves from the evils of poverty and deprivation and it is directly impact in balancing their socio-economic efforts.
The economy as a central part of human society it plays pivotal roles in determining almost every kind of activities in life. The Puroiks so far as per the statistical reports have low literacy rate because they are academically poor also. The fact is that these people were not only subjugated but was also deprived of their right to education or learning which is fundamental for every born-live people. Due to this reason they fail to absorb employment opportunity in most cases. Another reason is the lack of commercial knowledge to start occupation of income generation like marketing, transportation, communication and other such things that are helpful to give insights and exposure experiences.

Development in material aspect can be identify by infrastructure development that generate knowledge (schools), improve health condition (Medical), provide recreations (entertainments), develop and improve services (road and communication) and numerous other opportunities. The lack of proper institutional set ups in Puroiks inhabited places is one of the major causes responsible for poor in terms of economic, education, cultural orientation and political consciousness. Absence of all these things in their localities leading to migration towards some developed places. But even after their settlement in such places they still facing challenges in their life regarding their livelihood. They could not easily catch up with the activities of advancing modern world.

IV. Objectives of the Study

After going through above literature on Puroiks and other related literature on community life and livelihoods, the current study has been framed to accomplished the following objectives:

i. To explore about the occupational nature of Puroik community;

ii. To understand the livelihood pattern of the community in relation to their social well-being; and

iii. To suggest or recommend measures to resolve the concerns faced by the Puroiks.

V. Materials and Methods of the Study

The researcher draws data from both primary and secondary sources. Primarily, the community (settlement, demography, culture, etc) and its people had been taken into account, while the secondary sources were drawn by two different modes viz. offline materials and online storage. The primary methods are basically concerned with the physical or social structure, functional dynamism, behavioural pattern, and different aspect of socio-cultural bedrocks. On the other hand, secondary methods dealt with the existing literature whose writings are related to the study undertaken. Such data helps to examine, re-examine, and cross-examine the data itself whether there is a gap; they are reliable or verifiable to a greater extent as far as the academic domain is concerned. By taking care the qualitative based exploratory research in view, the researcher made a humble attempt to tap requisite data by employing the various tools of data collection.

As far as this study is concerned, the researcher collects the primary data through (a) case study method based on case study guide or principles, (b) semi-structured interview method (both formal and informal), (c) observation method (both Participant & non-participant), and (d) contact method in order to grasp the real-life situation and challenges of the people through Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Discussion took places with the individuals to delve into the matter and seek the views of persons of different age-group.

The secondary data on demographic and other related features of the study area in particular and community in general were collected from different institutional settings, like (a) administration, census records, statistical abstracts, any other agencies, (b) the findings of the literature review, particularly from the journals, magazines, newspaper clips, etc. were also used as the secondary sources.

VI. Universe of the Study

The universe of the present study is Puroik Colony, located in PapuNallah (Naharlagun) under Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh. It has been chosen as a unit of analysis supposed to be representing the whole community living in different parts of the state. The said village is inhabited by both Puroiks & Nyishis, but the majority is Puroiks. The Colony is intersected from the National Highway 52A by a rivulet, which means it is located near river bank. Due to administrative failure, there is no official record available about the colony like demography, number household and other things. However, the researcher managed to figure out by rough estimation based on the narration of community people during fieldworks. It is assumed that at present around 20 to 25 houses are there that the population strength is roughly assumed as 100. As per the community people, the present location was allocated by the state government for resettlement of the landless freed Puroiks after the judicial intervention on the alleged bonded labour stirs up the masters. In order to present the social facts more authentic, the researcher also visited the other Puroik inhabited villages viz. Jiping, Maching, and Paji under Nyapin administrative circle of Kurung Kumey district during January 2017.
Fig. 1: Sketch Map of Puroik Colony (Study Area 1)

Fig. 2: Sketch Map of Jiping & Maching Villages (Study Area 2)

VII. Results and Discussion

Nature of Settlement

In case of the Puroik community, the nature of settlement, location of settlement and manner in which they survive has a unique in its own. Unlike the other such similar communities, they settled home in the mountainous region preferably nearby the river side. Preference is purely made on their motivation rather than compulsion or any kind of coerce from outsiders. Empirical evidence suggests that the Puroik use to live in mountainous region preferably settled down in nearby the river stream(s) since the past many generations. They survived their life in the interior places which is very much far away from public institutes- schools, hospitals, transportation, fair price shop, etc. As far as the present study is concerned, the nature of settlement and household compositions of the Puroiks may consider at two types viz. (a) Interior type (b) Exterior type.

(a) Interior Type: where there is no road connectivity, schools, hospitals etc. The settlement does not base on soil fertility or with the fullest interest of economic gains, but mainly on accessibility of forest resources. The main reasons of their settlement at the mountainous region are:

(i) For easy access of forest resources like fruits, seeds, vegetables, woods and different variety of species and edible things

(ii) To practice of forest hunting & trapping of wild birds & animals.

(iii) To enjoy fishing in the uphill rivulets.

(iv) Customary belief that the mixed dwelling with the Nyishi/other communities may cause/resulting to indict curse in the form of immature death, mere deformity and destructions in some or other forms in the generations ahead.

(b) Exterior Type: This type of settlement is found in the semi-urban areas where there is potential connectivity or availability of road, transports, schools, hospitals, dispensary, and other modern facilities at least nearby to their village/colony. The people dwelling in such places are now in transitional level. They no longer practice non-agricultural occupations particularly the task of sago flour making and days long hunting-trapping practices which they used to do in the past times. Being little bit modernized, urban dwellers substitute the old occupations by adopting modern form of lifestyle, seeking for employment both in public & private sectors. Their household structures as well are built at good condition. But the way they do not practice the old-fashioned works is just for the sake of improvement of life. It cannot be termed as full divorce to their traditional practices.

Occupational Practices

Unlike the present time, the traditional occupations of the Puroiks were forest-centric only. Of many other practices, their main occupations are: (i) Sago making/producing, and (ii) Hunting, trapping, and fishing. These two are very prominence in the context of the community because they are well known to
have equipped the skills, expertise and knowledge of them. As per the mythology, this kind of practice is their tradition. More than occupation it is their identity. In fact, no other tribal community of Arunachal Pradesh do have the sago making as traditional occupation. Their neighbouring Nyishis, Bangrus, and few other tribes of the state are also practice, but in minimal extent not exactly as occupation like. To cite that, Nyishis use the sago as meal for pigs, yet they too occasionally produce sago flour for consuming purpose. Adoption of sago making as occupation gives them the unique identity before the world of tribal heritage. On the basis of both the historical and empirical evidences, the occupational practices of the community can be understood under the following two heads:

(i) Sago making/producing

This occupation comprises multi-level tasks purposefully adopted for the same. The first task is the growing and gardening of sago plants. When it reaches to reap season, the trunks are cutting down then again crushing the logs till it produce mechei (flours) from them. The sago plants are of three types. In their own dialect they are called as (i) Tasung Yaagligh, (ii) Chanang Yaagligh, and (iii) Bara Yaagligh. The synonymous terms in Nyishi, they are called Tasse, Tachi, and Tabbe respectively. Here the term 'Yaagligh' means 'the seeds' rather than calling the plants, yet it is directly implying the plants only rather than the seeds.

(ii) Hunting, trapping, and fishing

There are different forms of forest hunting practiced by the community. Different poaching techniques are employed against each target. Hunting is usually carried out on the dense forest to both the animals and birds. Trapping on the other hand is a specialized based hunting technique where people have to acquire sufficient knowledge to operate it. Trapping system has different structures and names as well. They are locally called as Gurang, Makai/Maang, Kyaam, and Ueye. Among them, Gurang is one of the most popular hunting-trapping form of occupation which still prevalent among them. In their dialect, it is called Kubung Mingnam means Rat Hunting. Gurang is a systematically design bamboo frame structure put in place on hatch design to kill the wild rat. It takes place in the dense forest where rivulets present and in the high altitude humid mountainous region. Belief was that in such places there is mass movement of rat during winter, thus they use to live in the forest for certain period conforming to social taboos. By collecting to stocks the carcasses, they bring it to the local market for sale even directly sold it to individuals. Apart from these two prominent occupations, the Puroiks also have the habits of collecting bamboo soothsand sold it to local vendors. They also earn money from the sale of local craft items.

Occupation & Economy

Besides simple living with minimum economic gains, Puroiks in past days does not preferably serious about earning, investment and making up financial gain. Since they were under the commands of the master, they have to serve themselves as well as to their masters. Deuri (1982) mentioned that apart from their main occupations (above mentioned) they are to help their master in shifting cultivation by way of jungle cutting, burning, sowing, and harvesting. In terms of economy, there was no durable means of practice to popularize the same on sustainable basis. They simply sold out the agricultural products and forest-gathered items in local market. On the other hand, they used to maintain the barter form of economic exchanges which was quite prevalent and very popular among many tribes in the past. There are no definite trade routes from the Sulung (now Puroik) country to any outside places, nor do they depend to any considerable extent on the external supply of such requirements or luxuries as are procured through trade and barter (Deuri, 1982).

Nature of Occupational Engagements

The study by Pertin (2010) described the division of labour on the basis of age and sex depending on capability to work. According to him, roles and responsibilities are determined/pre-determined by gender classification, and yet again depend on age/maturity of the person concerned. He defined the roles and responsibilities of each sex as:

(i) Male Person: Honey Collection, wood carving hunting, trapping, leather works, and others.

(ii) Female Person: Weaving, preparing local drinks, husking of food grains, and household chores.

However, this study found no specific division of work among the Puroiks in study areas. However, the same is commonly shared together by entire family members. They do way all sorts of work in a collective manner without assigning each folk a particular task or responsibility. A FGD participant told that “For us every works is doing collectively by all the family members except the teenager”. It is clear that during the past days there has been no concrete labour division system among the Puroiks. But as the days go by, they gradually learn the new cultures of the evolving world.
Nature of Employment: Patterns of Changes

Employment as one of the life feeding aspects can found the man engaged somewhat with either of three sectors viz. government, private and mixed activities. Economic level of the people is determined by different factors; thus, the employment is one of the sources for that. Concerning the Puroiks, they cannot directly be accounted to certain economic classes. Their livelihood is mainly depending on agriculture. They sustained their economic needs by growing food grains, seeds, vegetables, etc. Apart from agriculture, they are also engaged in other economic oriented works like daily wages, contractual hiring, and sale of forest products which includes vegetable, seeds, fruits, carcasses, etc.; thus, they are self-employed. So, it is not easy to access the same in line with that of the formal sector employment. By this means only the Puroiks get self-employed through which they sustain their livelihood. For them employment had been a distant dream, because of lack of education and incapable to compete or least qualifications.

The Welfare State and The Puroiks

India as a welfare state makes several policies and programs for its citizens. Other than economic aspect, welfare, in real sense also implies physical safety, good health, better education, good communication, etc. Thus, it can be construed as a larger term which the same is considered in contextual based. It means the welfare ultimately refers to total conducive environment of the larger society. Welfare state urges for good governance. Policies are formulated in greater interest of the people and same implemented in subsequent periods. But a dark spot in our governance is that despite bringing number of stringent legislations, laws, policy programs they are not well responded as per the laid down norms & various other provisions therein. If questions are made on that account, there are numerous lame excuses. The Puroiks is one of the worst victims of that.

The government of India put a blanket ban on the heinous practice of bonded labour system on 25th October 1975 with the enactment of The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. However, it was only in letters not in spirit, because aftermath of the Act, such practice continues and was very prevalent in different interior places. This continuity is the sign of lapse from the government side. The law enforcing agencies like Magistrate, Police, Courts of law, and other statutory boards would have make strict vigils and monitoring the effective enforcement of the abolition rules. But, it seemed the state’s fiasco in responding of the same over the times. The entire state mechanism has ignored which resulted to suffer exploitations in the hands of master community since many decades. It is very unfortunate that they were forced to serve or bound to obey the orders of evil masters.

In socio-economic context, Puroiks have continually faced victimization from the ends of both the masters and handful of authority persons. It is obvious that due to their negligence the community have to go through ordeals in the past days that is still refresh them as a nightmare. According to the community people, at the time when they were under the dominion of the masters they were in apprehension that the government provides funds to them, but never got it. A FGD Respondent recalls that, “in the past days also government made financial supports by means of rehabilitation, old age pension, for backward sections etc. but to our utter surprise, the amount supposed to be received by us was conspicuously withdrawn by our masters, to which they never handled us”.

There are number of policies and programs pertaining to the scheduled tribes which the Puroiks deserved to be benefitted. But very sadly, the Puroiks habitation do not received proper care from the government. Both the centrally and state sponsored schemes, projects, and packages were not implemented in proper manner rather the funds are siphoned off without physical or justifiable execution of the works.

Changing Lifestyles in Present Days

Impact of Religious Interventions

Religion, in fact, is a form of society that endorsed the urges of inner soul to reflect its motive in the form of services, charity, philanthropic activities at practical level. As far as the state of Arunachal is concerned, intervention of Christianity is obviously found. Intervention is in the form of rendering humanitarian services to the downtrodden and marginalized sections of the society. The Puroik in particular they express joy on every help, supports & motivations extended to them by the Christianity. A case study respondent opines in this regard, “everything changes seen today are only because of the Christianity. The masters because of their true faithfulness they changed their mindset. Although, such trend is still existing in some pockets, in most of the cases, the masters themselves have voluntarily released us because of their being a true religious”.

It is known by such religious institutions made a huge impact on their social sphere. Like many other tribal communities of the state Puroik also had deeper history of traditional belief system which their...
ancient forefathers used to do by means of ritual chanting and performing sacrifices culture. But these days the majority of the population has divorced their past belief system to whom they considered it as evil designs. By virtue of embracing Christianity, they rather propagate the religious values and ethics among their people.

Religious intervention to the community is also found in social, healthcare and education sectors. Earlier, people took the ailing person to the priest’s house else they request the priest to come to them for ritual performance. But, today with the advent of Christianity even the ailing including the patients are healing through prayer. Women participants at the FGD session expressed joy for the same, describing that, “for our poor, Christian is the only alternative to gain peace, love, care, compassion, and is good for our overall wellbeing the health in particular”.

This signalled the socio-economic shift of the community from the past days sago making occupation to daily normal ways of life in present times. Unlike the past habitual practices, today, the Puroiks are at the transitional stage whereby changes are taking places in their lifestyle, conducts and behaviour. At present, Nyishi Baptist Church Council (NBCC) in collaboration with a Hyderabad-based Indian Evangelical Mission (IEM) is actively engaging in the service of the community. They are running two numbers of hostels “Jeevan Jyoti” at Doimukh, Papum Pare District, one each for the school-going girls and boys. They are providing food, shelter, cloths, study kits and tools absolutely in free of cost to around 60 Puroik students (Field Visits: January 2017). Besides the NBCC, the Missionary of Charity, Don Bosco Mission & few others, they are also helping the community by means of free education, health care and in other medium also. The Missionary of Charity in particular, reaches out the rural populace and freely distributes cloths and medicines, in fact, give consoles to the downtrodden people.

**Acculturation:**

Acculturation is a process in which the people as a result of an outsider influences rather adopt new form of lifestyles, practices, and cultural behaviour that is different to their original one. The ultimate consideration is that they have to conform the way that the world evolves. In this world of globalisation, particularly the young generation showing disinterest in traditional ways of life, thus they prefer to adopt modernity. At the time of FGD sessions with the youth folk, the researcher was informed that “they (youth) are inability to learn the age-old customs and traditions and many are not serious about and pay heed on their own cultures, beliefs and traditional systems because of overtime busy in social media sites”.

Acculturation, in other words, can be called as cultural genocide with the excessive, unchecked and active popularization of the culture of the outside. The case is apparently impact on Puroiks too. Many young people they rather take enthusiasts on active engages at the social networking sites like mobile phones, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. They watch movies, cartoons, promos and other audio-visual entertainments from which they drew inspiration and excitement, in fact get insights about newly breed lifestyles. The one clear instance is that young boys or girls in the name of fashions they wore variety of dressing costumes. This implies the growing influence of western culture in the midst of tribal cultures that is a matter of great concern. Because it is not only diverting their cultural motivations to some to other, but at the same time it kills their value-laden times and hampers the career of many people.

**VIII. A Summary of Findings**

During the month-long study, the researcher has find out many things that has been described in the preceding paras. The summary of the major findings of the study may be put under the following heads:

**Historical Injustices**

The study found that since a long time back the community has been subjected to exploitation. They were entirely subjugated whereby the so-called masters had a free hand to undertake and disposed-off every act supposed to be their personal wishes.

During the case study a women respondent recalled that,” The one of the worst forms of exploitations committed by masters against the Puroiks was that, they were subjected to sale & purchase, besides which they tortured them physically (thrash, attack, assault, beaten up) and psychologically (abuse, harassment, threat or threat to beaten up). We were bound to obey what the master commands, thus, compel ourselves to follow at any cost, a respondent rued”.

Empirically, it has come to the knowledge that entire life of the community people was bestowed with servitude tasks that they were never been independent for themselves.

Another respondent emotionally informed that,” Once child is given birth he or she is entitled for servant and is imminent to become a labour force of the master’s family. Consequently, we parents in one hand
and our children on the other hand do not have ample opportunity to share love, joy & peace as a family, thus, we fail to embrace motherly love for our children under such circumstances”.

During an FGD session, a respondent narrated in her words, as”I must say that our agonies being a slave were in fact a dreadful. Our masters were restlessly engaging us in their works. We have to work simultaneously for the masters and for our family. Working for the master and doing everything works at his disposal was the main source of our livelihood. Else, they would either physically assaulted or sometime gave punishments to us. Punishment was so harsh that we compelled ourselves with no any other option than to obey their commands. They hurled violence against our family at the cost of their personal problems also”.

Nevertheless, the Puroiks being counted as a member of the master’s family, yet they were not considered practically. Here the question of acceptance arises, but of no values. Firstly, the alleged masters accept them (Puroiks) as their family kins, maintain reciprocity and look after each other. But on the other hand, the master refused to accept when they (Puroik) approach or demands for autonomy and self-determination. The issue of social alienation rooted at this very point. By ignoring the desires of the Puroiks, the master discriminate in disguised of dominancy. Apparently noted that master denied the Puroiks children for schooling, nor they permitted to access certain opportunities.

To that extent, a respondent recalls his past life how his Nyishifellow boys have threatened him of dire consequences if he continues to go to school, a Case Study Respondent recalls emotionally,”They abused me mentally and sometime physically also. They use to say me that you the Sulung people, what are you doing here in the school, you would have been attending your master helping him in the field. Those days were like a nightmare I had ever seen”.

The act of inequality was resulted out of the master’s selfish attitude in which they considered the Puroiks education as the biggest threat against their dignity, status and authority. As a result of suppression, the Puroiks could not get education that led them to experienced under development in all spheres. It causes to isolation from the modernity. They keep aloof from modern system for a quite long time. The Puroik, like many other communities have no adequate insights about the values of family planning, health care, children or adult education. They merely conform to what they have and how their system had been.

The other important concern of the community is that they (Puroiks) were not considered or classified under the backward category. Till today, neither the central nor the state governments have initiated the mechanisms for the purpose. They simply overlooking at the pauperism of the community without bringing out a meaningful and helpful policy. So, to say injustices in this context are not only to blamed on the master community but bigger parts are also responsible to the government.

Livelihood Patterns

Puroiks draws their livelihood sources from forest products, minor works which is often a daily basis. Mostly they engaged in non-agricultural works. Besides gathering of forest products, they are also very active in hunting, trapping and fishing. These become a main source of economic earning and sustain their daily life. They are self-employed by their own capacity by engaging themselves in economic oriented works. They earn money from daily wages, contractual hiring of other people, and sale of forest products which includes vegetable, seeds and fruits. Having being expertise in hunting-trapping practices they also earn handsome amount of money by selling the animal carcasses. The adult members of the family altogether are simultaneously workers, earners and employees too. By this means only the Puroiks get self-employed through which they sustain their livelihood. For them formal sector employment had been a distant dream, because of lack of education and incapable to compete. Thus, other than hunting-gathering and manual works they have no substitution which can be considered as a source of livelihood. During old times, they don't think for saving & preserving. It means they totally lacking the ideas of procurement or stocking of the food items. They had no cognitive advancing for future security nor to earn or invest it. The lack of education resulting to poverty again is a leading factor of backwardness of the community.

Slave Free Movement

Slave free movement was started since last three decades. In mid-1980s an MLA nominated from their community (Sijilulley) started such movement, but in the manner of mass awareness & orientation among the community people. In his words, Mr. Julley narrated as,”Being a lone representative of the community, I advocated for the freeing of slaves from master’s dominion. I insisted the state government to bring out an appropriate mechanism to emancipate his community people from the clutches. As a result, the state government proposed to pay compensation to the master on behalf of the Puroiks. The government pay compensation to the masters of Koloriang and Sarli areas. On received of compensation the masters instantly released the Puroiks for their own freedom. But, very sadly the released slaves were returned back to their
masters under compelling condition. The reason was that, Puroiks have no land (both private & community) to 
depend their livelihood. They also feel insecure and feel unsafe to work for them, because nobody come forward for their support as it was their own master 
who protect them from outside influences”.

This has been continued to be a setback for the community that they fail to establish their life, thus 
went back to the former state.

**Nature of Politico-Administration**

Politics is not only powerful but more than that is the most exploitative and alternate mechanism of 
contaminating the crystallizing ideal societies. Many people or community as whole are often trapped in it 
whose outcome is the creation of divisive atmosphere among themselves. The long lasted sufferings of the 
Puroik has been a result of defective political system that was cropped up like a hell as they could compel 
themselves to bow before words of the master. This suffering is still become a hurdle for the overall 
development of the community owe to suppression kind of attitude against them. In one hand, a superiority 
feeling of the master community is the biggest threat to the Puroiks and on the other hand, the community’s 
whirlwind efforts to uplift their own people is going through tough time. Inadequate political 
representatives (GPM, ASM, ZPM, etc) from their community is weak point that the community people most 
of the time fail to make strong resistance against the commission of such injustices. Even the rightful 
beneficiaries are not recommended. Almost every time non-Puroiks without practical works they siphoned 
off the funds with the pleasure of political bosses. Their opinions are suppressed despite several efforts. 
This clearly shows the unwillingness of political classes or the government as a whole to do in favour of the 
community. This led to socio-economic disparity of the community.

Empirical observation revealed that, as of now, only 5 to 7 political representatives are there 
representing the entire community (4,554 persons: 2013). In such situation, even the public outcry of the 
community is not well taken because majority belongs to powerful groups. Within the ambit of political 
institutions decisions of the majority is always superseded and binding anyhow. To this context, it was also 
revealed the annoying reality of the subsequent governments of Arunachal Pradesh. As per the records, the 
apex body of the community- All Puroik Welfare Society (APWS) starts the move with the government since 
last two decades demanding for the constitution of statutory body to look after the Puroik affairs, creation 
of Puroik Autonomous Council and several other demands. But despite several representations and 
submitting memoranda there has been no headway in this regard.

Other than the state, no third-party intervention has ever been seen at practical level to ensure 
legal protection and avail rights & opportunities. None of the political parties, pressure groups, NGOs & 
other agencies had ever advocated in the cause of Puroik society. It was only after the Supreme Court 
verdict (1996) that ordered for strict implementation of The Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act, 1974, that 
labour department and human rights stakeholders stepped up for their rescue. In fact, the Puroik have been 
wrongfully confined under serfdom tradition for the last four decades. Had the administration been very pro-active humanly such injustices would not be done on them. So, the administrative failure is responsible 
for the same.

**State Interventions**

Unlike the past time these days it seems the administration and other government machineries 
being proactive to the vexed, but important issue. Nowadays, not only the government, but the civil society 
organizations and right activists they also come up and realized about the impoverish life situation of the 
community. Though it was not functional, government tries to implement the legal directives, with no 
doubt, also made proposals in response of the APWS’s claims. State has intervened in various levels viz. 
legal battle, political and administration. The state government under the chief minister ship of Shri 
GegongApang had constituted a high-powered committee (HPC) in 1997in order to study, survey, and 
recommended the feasibility of the same. State dignitaries had also expressed their concerns in many 
occasions. Recently, the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh Shri P.B. Acharya pays his maiden visit to the 
Puroik inhabitation at PapuNallah, Naharlagun, had assured to expedite the long impending works for the 
community (The Arunachal Times: 4 March 2017). The state’s Rural Development Minister Shri AloLibang 
while attending the grand Gumkum-Gumpa festival of the community in Itanagar assures for every possible 
support from the government. As per the available sources, bonded labour was outlawed in India through 
an ordinance in 1975 and then through legislation in 1976. The first systematic survey of bonded labour 
was carried out by the Gandhi Peace Foundation and the National Labour Institute during May to December 
1978 and placed the total number of bonded laborers at 2.62 million (Sarma, 1981). The estimate was 
based on survey of 1000 villages in 10 states. In the survey, 61.5% of the bonded laborers were members of
Scheduled Castes (SC) and 25.1% were members of Scheduled Tribes (ST). Among the employers, 89% were agriculturalists. The survey categorized bondage into inter-generational bondage, child bondage, loyalty bondage, bondage through land allotment and widow bondage. The 32nd Round of the National Sample Survey Organization gave an estimate of 343,000 bonded laborers in 16 major states.

**Scope for Further Enquiry**

There are still good scopes for further enquiry in this regard or in other aspects. In the future researcher will be able to carry out more studies on the community. It will help to understand the actual life conditions, their current life situations and many others. Prospective aspects for further study include the clear understanding about the implication of bonded labours, servitude, and forced labour in this context. Regarding the Puroiks all the above terms are interchangeably used by different scholars whereas the fact lies behind them. Pertin termed the prevailing condition of the community as a result of “feudal arrangement” and “customary obligation”. Likewise, few other scholars including Verrier Elwin (1957/2006), C. von Furer-Haimendorf (1950, 1982), and C.R. Stonor (1952) have mentioned this community as a traditionally bounded natural condition in their writings. However, they did not provide clear scopes or understanding, but in different generalized perspectives. It is also needed to explore the traditional world of the community, how it evolves, and their nature of daily living.

**IX. Recommendations and Suggestions**

The researcher prepares suggestions and recommendation for the greater interest of the community. This may be considered as a little contribution of the researcher out of his painstakingly arduous task of carrying out study on the community. To formulate this, works in book & article forms of different people, researchers, and organizations have been consulted. The recommendations are hereby made against three domains viz. policy decision (for policy makers), policy implementation (for executive authorities), and social responsibility (for civil societies), under the given headings:

**i. For Policy Makers**

a. **People-Centric Policy**

The policy decisions taken by the government or any organizations must be people-friendly purely on participatory principle. Community people must be involved in decision making process, because they are the authentic source of understanding the problems at the ground level. Policies should possibly be accommodative and as per people’s wish rather than defective and helpless at disguise. Their advices, aspirations, feelings, opinions, and suggestions emerging from the ground should be well taken and accommodated in policy provisions. For that purpose, government must pay visits to key stakeholders like community-based organizations (CBOs) and also to different areas. This will help the policy makers design the policies in more sensitive and inclusive manner touching the lives and needs of the most marginalized in the society.

b. **Expert Consultation**

It is suggested that, in every major government policy making subject experts must be consulted. It has been a common assumption of the people that, policies are made by well experienced persons. But important to know here is that policies are made by our representatives or politicians. They are matured in terms of politics, but not on subject context. That is the reason many policies, programs and schemes are not well responding to the people’s aspiration, because they take decisions in closed door luxurious offices more often than not. Therefore, the better means to understand the whole facets of the situations is inclusion of subject experts like professionals, academicians, activists and promoters in the decision-making board. This must also be applicable to the case of the parliament and State/UT Legislative Assemblies’ Constitutional Amendments, drafting of bills, review or kind of evaluative engagements at certain stages.

c. **Area Development Schemes**

Government should extend maximum supports to this marginalized community in the form of allocating various centrally as well as the state sponsored schemes in their localities. This would benefit the people leveraging them to empowerment and enable the people to grow up with strength. The development must be ensured in priority based, such as:

(i) **Road Communication:** Every Puroik village should be linked with motor able road, besides which, a well finished porter track routes should be constructed for the terrain regions.

(ii) **Basic Amenities:** In every village basic amenities like electricity, Safe drinking water, toilet houses, etc. must be made available.
d. Infrastructure

Good infrastructure must be provided in the Puroik villages. It is the lifeline of Puroiks' upliftment otherwise they will continue to suffer odds. Infrastructure development is basically needful in the following sectors as per the ‘felt need’ expressed by community members:

(i) Education: Almost all the schools in various Puroik inhabited villages across the state are either in dilapidated or defunct position. The government must assess the situation by physical verification at the site. Those in the dilapidated conditions must immediately be revamped by providing adequate funds to construct school buildings, furniture, offices and staff barracks. And to those defunct one, the government must take necessary steps to ensure functional, such as, by posting teachers & other supporting staffs.

(ii) Health: The majority of Puroiks are lived in the interior places which are much far away from the location of government or private medical, pharmacy or clinics. They face acute problems of medication and treatment activities when they are struck by epidemic diseases. So, the government must make a precautious effort and/or special provision of visits of medical personnel to their home from time to time.

(iii) Public Distribution System: The government must help the Puroiks in establishing a PDS cooperative house in their villages.

(iv) Construction of Foot Bridge: As the Puroiks lived in forest-covered rivulets and mountain clad regions, they often face problems in daily movements from one place to another. The government must allocate adequate amount for the purpose of construction of suspension bridges.

e. Social Security

The government must ensure that every benefit entitled under various social security schemes & projects are properly dispensed. Many a times they were either neglected or snatch away by some tricky means. To avoid these loopholes, government must deploy officials for proper registration or enrolment of beneficiary rather than depending on the village authorities, PR leaders who are happen to be hail from master tribe. The schemes should mainly focus on social and health sectors in the form of insurance or any other forms.

f. Creation of Separate Constituency

The government must create a separate constituency for the Puroiks, be it in grassroots level Panchayat or in state assemblies/Vidhan Sabha, without based on population. It would help to tackle the affairs of the community in very effective way. Separation is needed because they are always deprived of electoral participation by virtue of backwardness and inferiority feelings by well to do social groups.

g. Social Rehabilitation

Government must bring out policies to solve the perennial problems of the community. There must be provision to construct dwelling houses besides allocating a permanent settlement area. For this the earlier proposed to the Rowta, Potal, andBalimukh Forest Ranges for the re-settlement of the community, must immediately be settled down. This will provide efficiency and viability of sustainable livelihood.

h. Creation of Development Agency

As the proposal has already been put for the constitution of Puroik Autonomous Development Agency (PADA), the government should expedite the process so that development activities can be precipitated in Puroik inhabitations.

i. Job and Vocational Trainings

Government must make a special provision for the categorical reservation, relaxation and concession in government jobs. In order to develop skills, imbibe inquisitiveness and personality development, the Puroik students must be offer free vocational trainings, conduct coaching and sponsoring for exposure tours.

2. For Executives

a. Strict Vigilance

Government must active in monitoring and supervising the works being implemented. The already existing three-tier based at Circle / Block, District & State Levels must be improved in their actions. It is an important stage that the development activities are carried out and entire execution is conforming the specifications. They must also carry out inspection and also directing the works from time to time.

b. Deploy Special Task Force

In order to maintain transparency, effectiveness and value oriented the state should deployed a special task force to act as government watch dog endowed with responsibilities to monitor, inspection, assessment and evaluation.
3. Direct Communication between Government & Community

In order to curb the menace of corruption, government must create a provision for the community people to make a direct communication (even informal means) with the Administration/ Magistrate of the concerned areas. This would help them devoid of suppression from the well to do communities who use to be fooled them by some treacherous means.

d. Fair & Just Adjudication

The government must ensure that the competent authority adjudicates every matter without favour and nepotism. Justice should be delivered without acting on prejudice with the influence of any outsiders/party. The paramount of the law should be respect by accepting its deeds.

e. Corporate Social Responsibility

The government must initiate a step to ensure the corporate bodies to render services to the community. A provision must be there to task any particular corporate for the service of the community. And it must mainly focus on the areas of education, health, personality development, skill-oriented programs, cultural promotion and in other important aspects also.

3. For Civil Societies

a. Inclusivity

The well to do social groups or communities must extend helping hands for the social upliftment of the community. Barring the selfishness kind of attitude, the better civilized communities must endeavour to bring them to the mainstream through some sorts of activities like organizing counselling, orientation and hold awareness programs. Inclusive approach should be there to include the community in value-oriented activities like NGOs, Vos, and other agencies too.

b. Voluntary Services

Voluntary services should be rendering for the benefits of the community. As the Puroiks lived in a vulnerable condition, other societies, organizations or any other like-minded person should voluntarily come to offer services by various means of donation, financing, supplying of sorties, medicines so on. This will further strengthen the brotherhood bonded among the state’s tribes.

c. Charity and Philanthropy

The local, national, international & religious based charity organizations should continue to serve the community. In fact, the community who had been subjected to bonded labour since centuries past they need the consistent care and guidance of somebody to keep the pace of prosperous growth vigorous and lively. Philanthropic activities rendered to this community will be an appropriate way to heal the wounds of social stigma.

d. Advocacy

Being in modern civilized society intellectuals, activists and other professional workers in particular and the people of the state in general, must come for their helps. They must raise voice for their equality, opportunity, privileges and rights. It is essential because Puroiks voice are being suppressed, undermined and distorted in the process by powerful people. It is very unfortunate that their rightful claims are not heard. So, a clarion call is pronounced here to all members of the societies to speak for them because they, after all, is our own brothers & sisters.

X. Concluding Remarks

The life situation of the Puroik has been in grim condition since long ago. Their life was distressful and deplorable at all. Poverty had been reigning them from so long time, resulting to lagging in every sphere of the society. If we talk of poverty, many people may think that poverty is natural and evitable purpose in the life of some person or community. But, it is just a bit of that concept, bigger than that is lies there which need to be realized. The Puroiks, after they become independent, again they are shockingly found themselves with no land to cultivate. Since many generations the community had been in such circumstance. They sustain their livelihood so long they were with the masters. This has badly impact on their social life. Besides which, they were psychologically exploited that they become victims. The researcher is very concerned about the educational scenario of the community. Due to lack of education they could not prosper nor acquire such motivations. Responsibility is the masters who have stopped them from going school. In fear of loss of control, master had a full control over them; they did not allow interacting with outsider people. With this, one can just imagine as how they can learn about or explore the new cultures, activities, and behavioural pattern of outside. It is virtually seen that the mastership had impoverished the Puroiks because of their authoritarian cultures.
This study was not confined with the study areas alone however, in keeping the view of relevance it covers up the community. The researcher sees the challenges facing by the people. Besides that, they are struggling for their freedom, rights, and opportunities since long ago. But constant failure in their efforts has never seized them from emerging towards destiny. In present competitive world, facing competition is another major challenging part of the community. It does not undermine the potentiality but based on the current scenario. Empirical evidence shows that so far only few (around 5 to 6 person) are graduated from among the community. It can easily assume that, due to lacking in terms of formal education qualifications, the community would definitely be lacking in qualitative aspects also. Being born and brought up under grim condition, their quality development was totally hampered. Thus, the need of the hour is to ensure that they are not fall in the prey anymore; rather everybody should come for their support.

The intervention of Christianity, in fact, is a great relieve for the community. It was neither in physical nor by materialistic form of influences, but by spiritual. People were touched by emotions, and then they develop compassionate feelings. By such manner the religion plays significant role in liberation of Puroiks from the clutch of master's strongholds. The later (master) had confessed their inhuman acts before the world in fear of divine God. This is very praiseworthy so far; the voluntariness is concerned. So, it can be termed that Christian faith made tremendous contribution in the Puroiks way of life in totality. Because after they embraced Christianity, they were not only free but also get helps in many forms. Likewise, other such organizations also must act like providers, helpers, protectors, and saviour.

The quest for better means of livelihood has been a crux of this small study. The researcher though couldn’t touch the whole aspects, felt that to some extent livelihood concerns of the community has been reflected in this study. Since it was an explorative approach there has been sort comings and uncertainties in different ways that might be a possible cause for inadequate exploration of facts. At last, the researcher encourages the youth forces of the community to be vigorous and diligent in their part, nothing is impossible to achieve the goal you pursue only if you are persistent.

References