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TRIBAL DISPLACEMENT IN INDIA-POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GLOBALISATION AND TRIBAL LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Tribal and Dalit communities are socially, economically, and politically weakest and the most deprived communities in India. Tribal people were considered as the 'untouchables' in Vedic chaturvarnya system. Mythical and traditional historic narration pictures the tribes are just voiceless groups. They considered as the victims of development'. They were largely displaced on developmental projects planned by government. This process was started from the colonial administration, it continued today itself. Displacement aggravated the process of alienating small and marginal farmers and tribes from their natural resource base, globalization forced them to alienating from their culture and native land. The fruits of globalization process have not reached to tribal areas fully. Under the market friendly regime, the poor, the marginalized that have no entitlement (land, other income, yielding assets, social securities, employment etc.) are kept out of market both legally and logically. Indigenous peoples are all the cusp of the crisis of sustainable development. Their communities are concrete examples of sustainable societies, historically evolved in diverse eco systems. Today, they face the challenges of extinction or survival and renewal in a globalized world. It is a reality that on the name of development, money making game is being played. Globalization tactically approached towards the tribal communities. Ultimately, it is the local indigenous people who are exploited and who suffer by bearing a huge loss economically as well as socially. The government machinery that they failed to realized the needs and demand of affected people. This paper is an attempt to analyze the political economy of development in tribal areas and explain how the process of globalization and the new economic policy lead to a series of initiatives that went on perturbing the life of tribal people.

KEY WORDS: Tribal, administration, development, indigenous

INTRODUCTION

The word tribe is generally used for a socially cohesive unit, associated with a territory, the members of which regard them as politically autonomous. Different tribes have their own cultures-dialects, life styles, social structures, rituals, values, etc.; the forest occupies a central position in tribal culture and economy. The tribal way of life is very much dictated by the forest right from birth to death. It is ironical that poorest people of India are living in the areas of richest natural resources. Historically, tribals have been pushed to corners owing to economic interests of various dominant groups. Globalization brings about profound changes in the life styles and working habits of people in their own native countries. Tribal displacement is the reality caused by the globalization in India.

TRIBAL LIFE IN INDIA

The constitution of India does not define scheduled tribes as such. According to Article 342 of the constitution, the scheduled tribes are the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within these tribes and tribal communities which have been declared as such by president through a public notification (Bakshi & Balakiran, 2000). Scheduled tribes are spread across the country mainly in forests and hill regions. The essential characteristics of these communities are

- Primitive traits
- Geographical isolation
- Distinct culture
- Shy of contact with community at large
- Economically backwardness

The proportion of scheduled tribes below the poverty line is substantially higher than the national average. Most of the tribals are engaged mostly in low skilled, low paying jobs, especially in primary sector. Subjection and exploitation of tribals is something not new, only the scale and rate at which it has taken place in 18 th century towards is unprecedented. Tribals have always lived in condition of economic autarky, marked by common ownership of land and forest resources. Tribals were always seen as backward and different from mainstream, and who were to be incorporated in to mainstream. So historically, they have either adopted or were subjugated and mainstream cultural, social, political, religious, economic, structures and practices imposed up on them.

Privatization of land during British era led to a flow of capital and penetration by market opened the gates for influx of non tribals especially money lenders and traders in to tribal areas. This opened up the way for large scale alienation of land from tribes

to non- tribes, especially after tribal areas came to be linked by roads and railways. The mechanism through which this was achieved was fraud, deceit, coercion, and most often debt bondage. These reduced tribal cultivators to the position of tenets, landless labors, and bondsmen.

The large scale industrialization , privatization and globalization for sake of development has emerged as the biggest threat to tribal's survival-ironically, the so- called modern civilized society has become a predator of the age old eco friendly , peaceful and harmonious life style. The tribals, their laws, and other resources are now exposed to the exploitative market forces, mostly due to the state and multinational companies (MNC) sponsored development projects to exploit minerals and other natural resources (Unnithan, 2001). Land alienation of the tribals by powerful entities has become a powerful phenomenon.

Though millions of people have been displaced by various planned development schemes since independence, no reliable data exists on the extent of displacement and rehabilitation. Only a few official statistics are available. Some case studies indicate that official sources, by and large, tend to underestimate the number of persons displaced by the development projects. In the absence of form project were data, the estimate of total number of people displace by planned development intervention from 1951 to 1990 range from 110 lakh to 185 lakh. However according to estimation a total of 213 lakh people have been displaced by various development projects. These figures do not include the sizable number of people who are acknowledged as being project affected (i.e. by loss of livelihood caused by natural resources extraction or degradation) those displaced in urban areas and those victimized by the phases of secondary displacement (Chandra, 2000).

Thus, backward communities, and more particularly people in tribal region have been most affected in this process of development since they live in resources rich region. Tribal areas produce most of the countries coal, mica, bauxite and other minerals.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEVELOPMENT

Tribes in India present a significant degree of cultural and ethnic diversity. They differ in their socio cultural levels as well as in their behavior patterns tribal situation in the country poses peculiar problems of development, not encountered in other areas. The peculiarities can be broadly summed up as geographical, demographic, socio- cultural and exploitative. Tribal development indicates serious challenges to the policy makers, administrators and

development activists. The socio economic forces of modernization and development have no doubt brought some benefits to the people of respective areas, but the benefits accrued to these have been largely outweighed by the harm more to them. Development induced displacement, involuntary migration and resettlement has caused marginalization of tribes and presented enormous problems to them (Sharma, 1998). The new economic regime has led to privatization and marketization of economy and thus it has been treated as powerful threat to the survival of tribal communities.

Tribals are displaced in the name of development projects like thermal power plants, wildlife sanctuaries; industries etc. Tribes lost their socio cultural heritage through a combination of development intervention, commercial interests and lack of effective legal protection. Development strategies under new economic policies led to a process of conscious and systematic annihilation of culture and identity of the first people- the Adivasis of the country. This process of globalization has invaded India since the introduction of new liberalization policy.

Until the nineties the country was guided by the socialistic model of development where the role of the state was clearly welfare and social justice was the fundamental mandate of the state. As strategies of colonialism were defeated and led to revolts in most developing countries, the powerful nation restructured their global agencies through neo global liberalization philosophies. This process of globalization has adopted in India as the part of new economic policy. This is a complete reversal of the welfare and socialistic essence of the constitution. It has ushered in an era of corporate, especially transnational control of resources where the state is handing over the national resources to industries on the pretext that state has failed to deliver. In other words, industry has become the state and has been given the carte blanche to frame the education, health, social, industrial, environment, legal policies, - all leading up to the extremely urgent need for production.

Conflicts over rights on land and other natural resources are arising out of swift changes in the new economic policy of India resulting in a shift in owning and control over the resources and the means, method and extent of exploitation. These images are a direct influence of the industrial sector to steer the stage away from the socialistic democratic philosophy and to adopt a market oriented approach. The paradigm of economic development is far removed from community needs and rights,

particularly those of Dalits, indigenous peoples and other marginalized poor in the country.

RESOURCE CURSE

The phenomenon of resource curse is not unique to India. In most nations of the world a high level of mineral dependence is associated with retarded economic performances. World Bank attributes institutional weakness and political economy as some of the reasons behind the resource curse. Resources rich countries exhibit weaker institutions compared to resource- poor countries. Mineral rich states have weaker property rights and poor enforcement of law and these lead to retarded development outcomes. Resource curse is very much a reality in mineral rich areas of India. In this neo liberal global market intervenes in the mineral rich tribal areas with the help of government authorities, indigenous tribes were forced to exclude from their native place.

ROLE OF STATES OVER DISPLACEMENT IN INDIA

The natural wealth of the tribal areas is under new forms of threat with the liberalization policies of the state government. Forest resources, minerals, and the natural beauty are projected as the major vehicles of commoditization of the region by relaxing the stagnant constitutional safeguards related to tribal lands. The government has invited industries to set up tourism projects and holiday resorts, mining projects, developing infrastructure for film industries and forestry/medicinal plantation projects. Since the state government provides legal deterrent to private, multinational and NRI bidders' government has been pressurizing the MNC to pass resolution for amendment of the act so as to invite private participation and industries.

This threat is most severe in the district of Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, which has rich mineral resource and has commercial potential to attract mining, tourism, and film industries. Mining leases, to an extent of 2000 acres were illegally sanctioned by the state to private industries, in this district evicting tribals from their lands until the Supreme Court judgment 1997 declared that all such leases were null and void. However, the state is not disused from renewing its efforts for alienating tribals from their land for industries. The future survival of the tribals is dependent on the strength of their struggle to resist these developmental policies of state which work against any form of social justice (Shukla, 2005).

By the 90s the public sector has been heaped with the choicest of abuses and accusations for having failed to deliver any progress to the nation. The resources available in the scheduled areas were

considered as having vast potential for exploitation and the new economic policy reflected a clear shift in the state revenue for the private sector.

It is true that scheduled areas are repository of rich natural resources and they hold most of the nation's wealth, weather physical, social, ecological, environmental, economic, or aesthetic. The resources have been sustained over the centuries and maintained with little destruction more due to the social and cultural practices of the forest dwelling tribal communities whose system of livelihood ensure minimum harm to the ecology. State perceptions of utilization of resources are diametrically opposed to the Adivasi world view of resource exploitation and this divide has only widened further with the intrusion of globalization market oriented philosophy of development.

In independent India, excluded and partially excluded areas were transformed in to sixth and fifth schedule areas respectively. The main difference was that the executive powers of the state automatically extended to the scheduled areas, unless directed by Governor. The land acquisition act formulated in the British era, is used even today with only minimal alternation serving as the main tool to acquire land from people for public purpose. What is public purpose is not legally defined (Agarwal, 1996). The decision lies with the state. The state is supposed to protect its people and to know what is best for them. Hence, its decision regarding public purpose is not being questioned. Tribal communities have been progressively alienated from their traditional rights over natural resources like land, forest, river, culture and that has eroded the very basis of their existence.

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON TRIBAL LIFE

Backward communities and more particularly people in tribal regions have been most affected in this process of development since they live in resources –rich regions. Tribes are facing the aftereffects of development. Some of the issues are discussed below.

The consequence of the present pattern of development is the continuing powerlessness of the weaker section due to the displacement and without any benefits from these developmental projects. Several studies have documented the qualitative consequences of forced development. These consequences vary with local circumstances, but the ultimate common factor underlying the displacement effect is improvidence. This occurs along the following crucial dimensions. Landlessness, homelessness, joblessness, food insecurity, social disarticulations, loss of common property increased

morbidity and mortality. Tribals also have been victimized on the basis of their political rights.

In independent India, national development has been largely equated with economic growth and surplus. Large, centralized industries, irrigation projects have been symbols of such development, which through the process of industrialization promised to set India on the path of modernization and development. One of the inevitable outcomes of this has been massive environmental degradation and development induced development.

Immediately after independence, a series of large dams were planned and built on some of the major rivers in India. Large dams promised to solve the problems hunger and starvation by providing irrigation and boosting food production, controlling floods and providing much needed electricity for industrial development. It was this grand promise that prompted Pandit Nehru, our first prime minister to call dams are secular temples of modern India. Environmental and social costs of such large dams were thought to be an inevitable price that one had to pay for such development. Socio- ecological costs of large dams were largely underestimated and ignored. When recognized in passing, they were justified by invoking utilitarian logic of few people has to sacrifice the greater national good (Pratiksha, 2014).

Dam building in India has been regarded as the sole responsibility of engineers and technical experts. Peoples movements and researchers have brought the social, ecological, and political consideration in large dams to the forefront , but in dominant view , participation of people in the process of planning and development projects is still thought to be irrelevant. There had never been any precedent for informing the people beforehand about impending displacement.

RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION

Despite large scale displacement of people by various development projects since independence, the country lacks a comprehensive resettlement and rehabilitation (R and R) policy. In Indian federal structure, resettlement is a state issue, but only a few state governments have come out with a comprehensive R and R policy to resettle projects affected people. Thus due to the lack of a detailed and comprehensive R and R policy, the process of resettlement and rehabilitation of uprooted people has been minimal and not very successful. For example, in the Bakranagal project in Himachal Pradesh, a report prepared by the Center for Science and Environment (CSE) points out that 36,000 homelands displaced by the projects, only 12,000 were rehabilitated. The report further points out that in

case of the Ukai project in Gujarat, only 3,500 out of 18,500 ousted families were resettled (ibid).

The amount spent on the rehabilitation of ousters is also quite low. A study conducted by CSE states that as little as one percent of the total cost of dam projects in India has gone towards rehabilitation. Among the reasons for the dismal record of resettlement, the most fundamental is the disciplinary bias of project designers. Project authorities have not viewed resettlement as their responsibility and have tended to dump the job on local authorities. Resettlement plans sometimes have been developed on an ad-hoc basis. They are not based on any detailed, planned studies which indicates the exact number of people to be resettled, but are sometimes based on guess work.

CORRUPTION

It would not be an exaggeration to say that very few resettlement programs in the country have adequately compensated all those who have been displaced. The question of how ousters will make a living after displacement has been a matter of the lowest concern to planners. In fact, in most cases, the land acquisition act is used to pay insultingly low cash compensation that is grossly inadequate to restore and enhance standards of living.

There is enough evidence of delay in the payment of compensation, which is much below the market rate at the time of displacement. In all cases, land was acquired at the market price at the time the project was cleared. Compensation was given, however, at the time of acquisition, which may be after a long time. The amount of compensation given to ousters is arbitrarily determined and often involves resource to lawyers and middleman. The ousters also have paid a considerable amount of money as bribes to government officials for getting compensation.

GENDER BIAS

There is also a gender bias in the form of compensation. Substantial land is owned and even inherited by women in many case, but compensation is provided to the head of the family or to men. A uniform, state regulated patriarchy is thus forced up different cultures. Compensation to ousters is limited to individual land owners, who have land titles. Such a policy provides the Indian states with the opportunity to minimize its expenses on compensation (Joshi 1987, rehabilitation of sub merging villages, general report on sardar sarovar-narmadaproject, center for social studies Surat).

EMERGING NAXALISM

Poverty and lack of development extract a terrible price. And one of them has been the rise of Naxalism. Naxalism began as a peasant movement in 1967 in tiny hamlet of Naxalbari in west Bengal. The

fundamental demand was a radical land reform –land to tiller and a violent takeover of power was seen as only means of achieving this governments then was completely unwilling to yield to these demands and the movement was brutally crushed. Naxalism then capitalized on the tribal angst against development model being followed by the state. Tribals saw this as an opportunity to escape out of the poverty, displacement and deprived of lands being forced up on them by successive governments.

CONCLUSION

The tribal population is identified as the aboriginal inhabitants of our country. They are most vulnerable section of our society living in natural and unpolluted surrounding far away from civilization with their traditional values and culture. The development of the tribal population in India has been a major concern of the government, voluntary agencies, NGOs, social reformers, social scientists etc. but even after five decade we are no nearer to the solution of the problem. Rather, things appear to be more muddled than before. Schemes after schemes have been conceived and implemented. Most of them have failed. In most cases the tribal life has worsened. There should be a rethinking about the followed development policies of Government. We are unable to find a single statement as regards the strategy of tribal development in India. Without their development India can't reach the pure democratic status. The biggest mistake in the tribal development planning in India has been the clubbing together of all tribes, as if they constitute a homogenous cultural group. It is native to think that they all have similar problems and that same or similar development schemes will be useful to them all equally. Hence the government should frame special policy and programs that are required to address the redress these differences especially the context of globalization.

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