



Development versus Displacement in the Backdrop of Growing Environmental Damage: Impact upon the Aboriginals of India

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Abstract

Displacement and growing marginalization in the backdrop of man-made environmental changes throughout the world is a burning issue. The gross displacement without proper rehabilitation caused by several large scale government as well as non-government private projects like construction of SEZs, giant steel plants and mining in core tribal areas of eastern and southeastern India has drawn considerable attention in recent times. It is difficult to find any empirical study on rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced and dispossessed tribal people and the impacts of the eviction on their livelihood, earning physical cum emotional health. Indeed, the tribal population ('Adivasis') has been the disproportionate victims of development in India. For the last 117 years, land acquisition has been conducted in India leading multiple displacements under the aegis of the ancient colonial Land Acquisition Act of 1894. This paper highlights the sensational issues related to the abrupt change in environment and ecology and consequent displacement and sufferings faced by a section of aboriginal people in India. The hard truth is that despite the adoption of the National Policy of Rehabilitation and Resettlement 2007 the rehabilitation of the displaced tribal villagers has been totally dismal and shocking. Still it is a usual practice that the administration often seizes the land of the 'Adivasis', the most weakest section of people in India forcibly violating rehabilitation packages including "land for land" as provided under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The paper also tries to raise the issue of adopting a full-fledged resettlement policy for the protection of the poor tribal folks who are living under a vulnerable condition in one hand and of arguing for environment-friendly sustainable development.

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I. Introduction

Displacement and eviction caused by government as well as non-government development projects damaging environment consciously or unconsciously has drawn considerable attention in recent years. Like other countries of the world India is also suffering heavily from gross displacement and consequent marginalization in the name of economic development. Impacts of displacement on socio-economic life, standards of living and physical cum mental health of the displaced and destitute people are not properly assessed.

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In India while multi-faced development is going on, the weakest sections of people, namely the tribal (*'Adivasi'/'Upojati'*), the untouchables (*'dalit'*), and the backward class people have been suffering maximum in result of endless displacement. Women among these classes suffer even more. In post-colonial India nation building was usually equated with modernization, industrialization and fast economic development. But in parallel, 'the pursuit of development adversely affected the marginalized sections causing deprivation, displacement and devastation, and drastically altered the relationship of the tribes with the natural environment and the resources lying there in.' [1] When we build dams and reservoirs, roads, townships etc. we usually remove trees and forests, the wetlands and thus severe damages occur in the field of environment and ecology.

The tribal people have become unfortunately "the disproportionate victims of development in India". The tribal belts' abysmal poverty has been aggravated due to multiplied infrastructural development projects and the construction of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs). In reality, 'India may have one of the world's fastest-growing economies, but it is also has vast and often growing rural poverty. In actual practice, the state governments have embarked on models of top down industrial development where lands and forests are seen only as sites for economic profit...with the opening up of Indian economy, accelerated by globalization for trade and investment, the entry of industrial houses and mining companies particularly in the tribal core areas of Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhatisgarh and Andhra Pradesh and so on poses a serious threat to the livelihood of the tribal folks and their way of life.' [2] Globalized India is rapidly marching towards industrialization but at the same time it is confronting a serious problem of environment as well as development versus displacement. It is cited in The Guardian [2a] that UNEP (UN Environment Programme) found the rate of damage to the natural environment was increasing globally, despite concerted efforts to persuade governments to take measures to improve the condition of vital natural resources, such as water, land and the seas. Achim Steiner, executive director of UNEP warned justifiably, "If current trends continue, and the world fails to enact solutions that improve patterns of production and consumption, if we fail to use natural resources sustainably, then the state of the world's environment will continue to decline." [2b] No economy can succeed without empowering its indigenous population and coherent agrarian society. In this background the present study attempts to review the ongoing debate on development at the cost of environment, ecology and the growing marginalization as in contemporary India particularly and it's dismal effect on its tribal society as rest of the world.

The logical corollary is that the government should redefine immediately the meaning of development, it not mere growth in GDP. India is witnessing multitude unresolved cases of rehabilitation and resettlement of folk-tribal people who lose their land due to various development projects.

II. Development vs. Displacement—an Emerging Global Crisis

Development-induced displacement now turned into a highly sensational global issue irrespective of developing and developed countries. In August 2010 the present author had been astonished to see the silent demonstration of few displaced villagers of Britain nearby British Parliament in London. The ousted villagers-demonstrators camped there holding the placards: “Support Rural Britain”, “The Dispossessed” etc. Despite their negligible presence the protest of the evicted villagers seems to be alarming in respect of the current discourse of development vs. displacement. In fact, infrastructural development projects carried out by states worldwide, often with the assistance of the international communities, frequently result in the displacement of people from homes that stand in the way of dams and reservoirs, highways, railways, or other large scale construction projects. Almost all these are happening at the cost of damage to the environment and ecology.

During the last twenty years of the twentieth century, the magnitude of forced population displacement caused by several types of development programs was in order of 10 million people each year, or some 200 million people globally during that period. [3] In other words, while an estimated 25 million people are displaced worldwide by conflict, the number of people uprooted by development projects is thought to be much higher. In 1994, a study of all World Bank-assisted development projects from 1986-1993 that entailed population displacement found that just over half were in the transportation, water supply and urban infrastructure sectors. Extrapolating from World Bank data derive estimates of global figures, the study concluded that, in the early 1990s, the construction of 300 high dams (above 15 meters) each year had displaced for million people around the world. Urban and transportation projects accounted for six million more displaced each year. [4]

Development-induced displacement and eviction is the forcing of communities and individuals out of their homes, often also their homelands, for the purpose of mere economic development. It is nothing but a subset of forced migration. This crisis has been an integral part of both capitalist and socialist economies. Even in Communist China, a fair number of urban people faced forcible displacement on the eve of Beijing Olympic in near past. Displacement has been considered a socio-economic and cultural problem affecting multiple levels of human organization, from tribal and village communities to well-developed urban areas. On the other hand, displacement or the forced migration is affecting more and more people as countries move from developing to developed nations in this ‘global village’.

The people especially downtrodden people that face such migration are often helpless, hapless and suppressed by the power and laws of nations. In the name of development, people have been pushed off the land; their forests and water have been taken over by the state and the omnipotent market, so that they have deprived of everything except their labour power. The coercive aspect of the state power has impoverished the people through their ecological, economic, cultural and political marginalization, which prepares the ground for a resistance and discontent movements at the grassroots against these modernizing and development projects. [5] Study on the social impact of development projects suggest that indigenous people and ethnic

minorities across the cultures are disproportionately affected. Coming from politically marginalized and disadvantaged strata of society, these groups often end up neglected and impoverished.

III. Displacement and the UN's concern

Facing such serious threats from the process of worldwide displacement, the UNO adopted few steps to safeguard the fundamental rights of the people especially indigenous people in the process of displacement. In 1986, the UN General Assembly adopted a Declaration on the Right to Development, which states that “every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.” The heart of the problem is that people displaced by development works are generally seen as a necessary sacrifice on the road to endless development. [6]

Again, the rights of land ownership is guaranteed in the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Population Convention No. 107 of 1957 concerning the protection and integration of indigenous and Semi-tribal populations in independent countries, revised ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries Convention No. 169 of 1988, and UN Draft Declaration on Indigenous Rights. However, ‘all these explicitly recognize the ownership rights of tribal people, protection of natural resources and the right of the indigenous peoples to participate and give their consent in the use, management and conservation of these resources and consultation in the exploration and exploitation of such resources and in the benefits from them. It also urges the governments to respect the cultures and spiritual values of the peoples concerned of their relationship with the lands and territories. It also makes the provisions of adequate penalties for unauthorized intrusion upon or use of lands of the peoples.’ [7] Again, the UN document entitled “*The Practice of Forced Eviction: Comprehensive Human Rights Guidelines on Development based Displacement*” clearly states that evictions constitute prima facie violation of a wide range of internationally recognized human rights. But the irony is that these UN guidelines are not obeyed sincerely by the pro-development countries including India in our contemporary world.

IV. Factors like Environmental Damage behind Displacement and Marginalization

Development vs. displacement is profoundly associated with nature and environment. The symbiotic relationship of the indigenous population with hills and forests as well as nature grew through the ages in this globe. Especially forest did preserve their life and livelihood entirely in the past. But with the progress of civilization those peoples found that their traditional rights to forest and forest products being increasingly restricted by the respective state machineries through various ways. Indeed, development affects the environment in many ways. [8] Verrier Elwin (1902-64) [9] once observed in

the context of socio-economic dynamics of colonial India, “The forest belongs to the aboriginal.” Despite such dictum in actual practice, the Indian state uninterruptedly challenges the presence of these tribal rural peoples in forestland, their original habitats leveling those encroachers. [10] Few decades ago, Rachel Caron in his thought-provoking work, *Silent Spring* has shown the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources and the environment including forests. [11] The mindset of both developed and developing world still encourages the belief that nature is an infinitely exploitable domain, required for external development. [12]

However, displacement and eviction of the indigenous people has been historically related to numerous development activities such as the construction of dams and reservoirs for hydroelectric power and irrigation purposes, mining, creation of military installations, airports, industrial plants, missile testing grounds, railways, road and transport developments, urbanization, conservation projects, forestry, national parks and so on. In other words, ‘Ongoing industrialization, electrification and urbanization processes are likely to increase, rather than reduce, the number of programs causing involuntary population displacement. Causes and categories of development-induced displacement include the following: water supply (dams, reservoirs, irrigation); urban infrastructure; transportation (roads, highways, canals); energy (mining, power plants, oil exploration and extraction, pipelines); agriculture expansion; parks and forest reserves; and population redistribution schemes.’ [13] Besides these, in the countries like India where the governments are rapidly adopting globalization process as well as market-oriented capitalist economy as guiding force since 1990s, the tribal rural people are being displaced and evicted from their land especially due to imposition of Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Displacement also takes place where townships are established for technical and administrative personnel involved in the construction of the project, and where protected areas are established as compensatory measures for the forest lands and natural habitats that are lost to submergence. [14]

Ultimately, ‘the result has been the growing elimination and removal of natural resources, waters, wild life, forests and food supplies from indigenous lands either through commercial exploitation or incompatible land use; the degradation of natural environment; removal of indigenous peoples from their lands; and their displacement or preemption from the use of their lands by outsiders.’ [15] The hard truth is that the indigenous people have no say in the legitimacy of setting up development projects. Dash’s [16] observation in Indian context is also equally applicable to other developing countries: The state never consults on the type of development people desire, thus violating the right to decide their own priorities as a part of right to development as an inalienable human right.

V. Development-induced Displacement among the Tribal-rural People of India

India, the most important and developing state of South Asia is also passing recently through the crisis centering round development vs. displacement. In the

year 2009 Pandit [17] told a fascinating story of development-induced displacement of the tribal people in India in his edited work. It is rightly analyzed that in a developing country like India, the establishment of development projects seems to be indispensable to keep on its development process through various ways to meet the growing demands. But the most unfortunate part of the story is that a number of serious problems like large scale displacement of local people, especially Adivasis, and submergence of vast tracts of arable land and forests, widespread water logging, soil erosion, environmental degradation, lack of proper rehabilitation and resettlement, loss of traditional skills and leadership in the tribal regions have emerged. Moreover, despite all concerted efforts and massive inputs, the fruits of development did not percolate to the poor tribal and downtrodden lot. The interests of the local people more especially the tribals could not be well protected. The existing legal provisions could not save these wretched displaced people from exploitation.

‘Adivasis’ in Indian Socio-economic Dynamics and their Destitution

In India the tribals constitute the largest section of displaced and marginalized people. Next to Africa, India has the second largest concentration of tribal population. The ‘Adivasis’ (the Indian tribals), the indigenous people or original inhabitants belonged mainly to the Austric and the Dravidian races are living in Indian subcontinent from time immemorial. [18] There are about 414 tribal groups speaking more than 100 languages and dialects in India. [19] According to 2001 census the tribals, commonly characterized as the Scheduled Tribes (STs) by the Constitution of India constitute 8.20% (about 84.3 million) to the total Indian population. [20]

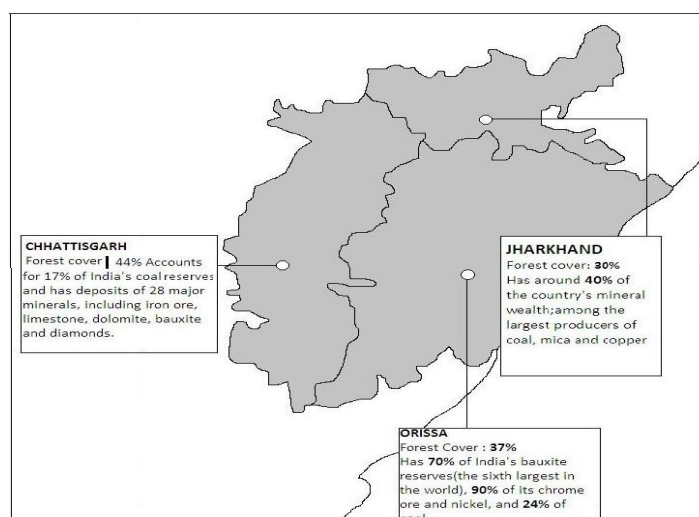
Those Adivasis have been living generally in forest and hilly regions, within close proximity of nature. More than 20% of the tribals, depend mainly on forests and forest resources for their livelihood. Those tribal people have been facing several types of socio-economic and psychological crises since pre-independent period. Under colonial rule they found that their traditional rights to forest products were completely restricted by the foreign government. Their condition remained almost same in free India. They are surprisingly labeled as ‘encroachers’. [21] The historical fact is, ‘Most of the tribal groups have virtually reached a state of total collapse and seem to fighting a grim battle for survival. The occurrence of tribal revolts for land rights in different parts of the country as its testimony. The large scale land transfers to non-tribals culminated in around tribal uprisings in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.’ [22] However, the forcible process of displacement and marginalization of the tribal rural population continues in globalized India without any noticeable interruption.

The increasing construction of development projects consistently displaced a massive number of Adivasis, poor and weaker sections in India. Nag shows that between 1951 and 1990 at least 21.3 million people were deprived of their sustenance by development. These development projects include dams (16.4 million), mines (2.55 million), industrial establishment and parks (0.6 million) of which nearly 25 percent have been resettled partially. 40 percent of these displaced persons and project-

affected persons were tribals and another 20 percent were 'dalits' (wretched untouchables). [23] It means one in every seven Indian tribal is a displaced person. Girija Saket, an Indian dalit farmer is a classic example who faced development-induced displacement and failed to survive. Saket committed suicide in 2008 by jumping into a nearby well after his hut was allegedly demolished to make a space for Essar Power MP Project at Bandhoura village in Madhya Pradesh. This incident shows that the displacement of tribals and farmers is not to follow the same pattern of disappointment among people, who have been living there for three decades. [24]

In time of drafting a national rehabilitation policy in 1994 by the Government of India, the total number of displaced persons was 15.5 million. By that time 39, 50,000 evicted persons had become rehabilitated and the backlog was 1, 15, 50,000. Totally 74.52 percent people were still awaiting rehabilitation. [25]

It has been mentioned earlier that three major categories of development projects historically emerged as the principal factors of displacement and subsequent marginalization of the Indian tribal and other destitute peoples; and these are namely the reservoir-dam projects, mining and industrial enterprises (see the illustration below), and direct land acquisition for building up Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Eastern and South-Eastern states of India such as Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, where most of the poor tribal folks lived in, are much more affected by these development projects than other parts of India since very beginning.



Source: Sunday Times of India, Kolkata (October 9, 2011)

A. Reservoir-Dam Projects and Displacement in Andhra Pradesh

India is the third largest dam builder country in the world and presently it has over 3600 large dams and more than 700 are under construction. But unfortunately in India the government does not have any concrete figures of people displaced by large, medium and small dams since independence. According to World Bank, in one of the dam constructed without proper survey has shown actual number of people displaced to

be seven times more than the number stated in the project document. [26] In a case of dam constructed on Narmada River in western Madhya Pradesh, the number of villages submerged happens to be 162 against authorities' claim of 101 villages. Then it is need not to explain that why 'Save Narmada Movement' ('*Narmada Bachao Andolan*') of the dam-affected villagers, led by distinguished social activists like Medha Patkar, Arundhati Roy and others is getting momentum day by day. According to a detailed study conducted by Indian Institute of Public Administration on an average 44,182 peoples are displaced by a large dam. It emerges that large dams are the single largest cause of displacement in India since it got independence in 1947.

Surprisingly the saddest part of the whole episode is that the project authorities do not consider the problems of displacement and rehabilitation as the vital parts of the project. Thukral [27] observes in a path-breaking way that in this sphere concerned authorities seldom undertake detailed and systematic surveys of the population to be evicted. Large dam projects can displace people in a number of ways including due to colonies, due to canals, downstream impacts, backwater effect, catchments area treatment, compensatory afforestation and so on. Such multiple displacement is not taken into account when estimating the numbers of displaced by a dam project.

However, in Andhra Pradesh at least two tribal settlements namely Reddigudem and Lakshmipuram in recent past are submerged due to Kovvada Kalva reservoir of West Godavari district. The total submergence area under this project is 285.27 ha (707 acres). This comprises 208 hacts (514 acres) of cultivable land, 39.7 ha (96 acres) of forest land and 39 hacts (96 acres) of wasteland. [28] Most of the submerged lands originally belong to tribal people in past, which were alienated by immigrant non-tribal settlers with dubious methods. Mallavarapu observes rightly after close survey, 'The identity, culture and ethos and the source of livelihood of these forest dwelling communities have been made a serious threat as their two villages are to be submerged due to foreshore of the Kovvada Kalva reservoir.' [29]

Kovaada Kalva reservoir is not a single and solitary case in Andhra or in entire India. There are a large number of villagers and tribals in Andhra Pradesh and also in Deccan who constantly faced displacement losing their land due to construction of reservoirs and check dams. A similar type check dam was constructed in Nagalmadki, Pavagada in South India which caused a gross displacement. The government invested around 14 crore for the construction of check dam but nothing on rehabilitation of farmers who will lose their lands. The villagers can not visit their farmland anymore because all they can see there is water, water and only water due to construction of dam. Thus, dam and displacement has emerged as a crucial factor in India since the end of the colonial rule there. We may mention here the unofficial figures of displacement due to Hirakund Dam are 1.8 lakh persons among them mostly are tribals and poor villagers. [30] A review by the World Bank posits that an average of 13,000 people is displaced by each new large dam constructed currently. [31] People of rural India including tribals displaced by the country's 3000+ large dams would number over 39 millions.

B. Mining, Industrial Development and the Evicted Tribals of Orissa

Out of nearly 414 tribes found in India, mentioned before, as many as 62 ethnic groups are found in Orissa's nine districts viz. Koraput, Kalahandi, Phulbani, Ganjam, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj etc. [32] This tribal area is historically known as bauxite and other mineral reserve plateau. Orissa in colonial times was the poorest and backward region of India and has been suffering from extreme poverty. By virtue of its cheap labour, transportation costs and mineral treasures, Orissa attracted the largest amount of private sector investments in the last decade of the previous millennium. In 2004 Navin Patnaik, the chief minister of Orissa invited the corporate houses to get the mining rights on massive iron and bauxite reserves of the state if they can set up plans to manufacture the end products. [33] Most of the proposed investment is in the minerals and metal sectors and the giant companies operating there are Tata Steel, Essar, Jindal, Sterlite, Hindalco, Greenfield, Posco etc. [34] However, the entry of these companies and MNCs poses a serious threat not only to the environment but also to the livelihood of forested tribals and their ethnic cultures. [35]

In fact, 'most of these powerful business groups mentioned above, known for their aggressive methods and high level government contacts, are acquiring tens of thousands acre of land, far in excess of their legitimate needs.' [36] Especially with the arrival of a foreign company like Posco in Kalinganagar-Jagatsingpur region of Orissa for construction of a big still project, the issue of displacement of the Adivasis has added a new dimension. Both state and central governments are being criticized for their dubious role in the negotiation of the land value for displacement which should have been undertaken by the Posco itself. It is rightly observed that the acquisition of tribal land for bauxite and steel production has evicted the Adivasis from their homestead and deprived them of a decent living, which can be marked by the widespread poverty, high incidence of hunger and starvation death, increasing migration of the people to the neighbouring states in search of a minimum livelihood. Unfortunately, the Orissa Government did not initiate any conciliatory move to build confidence between the project affected peoples (PAPs) and the government. [37] Mining in Orissa has created 'an estimated 50,000 environmental refugees, in the last few decades, according to news reports. Ota shows, 'On the whole, 1.4 million people, mostly adivasis have been displaced by industrial development projects in Orissa alone.' [38]

The very unfortunate part in this sphere is that the industrial houses and enterprises throughout India hardly spend their profit-money in local development programs. Even government enterprises follow the same anti-people methods. India's largest iron ore firm in Dantewada, Chhatisgarh is running by National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC). According to state government figures, in 2009-2010, NMDC made a profit of Rs. 3,448 crore, but contributed just Rs. 85 crore or 2.46% of the profits to development projects in the said area. [39] Felix Padel, the great, great grandson of Charles Darwin and the co-author of the *Out of this Earth: East India Adivasi and the Aluminum Cartel* (OUP, 2011) who worked extensively among the tribals of Eastern India for last 30 years opines explicitly, 'Mining companies are

ravaging south Orissa and Andhra Pradesh to mine bauxite. Instead of developing, mining is making the areas and its people more impoverished.’ [40]

C. Land Acquisition without proper Rehabilitation in Contemporary India

Land acquisition in India has been conducted for the last 114 years under the aegis of the draconian Land Acquisition Act of 1894. This act empowered the government to acquire private lands and properties in ‘public interest’. Sharma rightly observes that this ‘sovereign domain’ of government alienate people especially down-trodden and the tribal folks from their traditional sources of sustenance (such as lands, forests, and village habitats), livelihood and social networks and causes untold hardships and miseries. [41] Indeed, the concerned act does not place any legal obligation on either the project authorities or the state, beyond a limited conception of adequate ‘compensation’. Although the 2007 National Policy for Rehabilitation and Reestablishment lays down the principle of ‘minimizing displacement’ there have been no visible attempts to implement it for the benefit of the destitute. The policy fails to examine keenly the process of displacement, which is taken for granted.

It should be mentioned here that if this land is snatched, it will not only spell doom for the land-losers but also for the government which will lose its popular trust in public domain. It has occurred in so many places and in so many regions of today’s India, such as in Singur-Nandigram in West Bengal, Kalinganagar-Jagatsinghpur in Orissa, Nagarnar-Dantewara-Bastar in Chhatisgarh, Hariyana, and greater Noida in Western UP and so on. Few incidents relating to forcible land acquisition from the weaker sections of people of India are mentioned below.

- In May, 2001 NMDC decided to establish a steel plant at Nagarnar in Bastar, Chhatisgarh. The administration seized the lands of the Adivasis forcibly ignoring the appeals and protests of the latter. [42] Even to crush the people’s agitation once the police lathi-charged them, arrested many and sent them to Jagdalpur prison. In this way the Adivasis have been dispossessed and in the last few years, there has been no development as far as mass interests is concerned.
- In 2008-09 farmers of Singur in Hooghly and Nandigram in East Midnapore, West Bengal respectively made their utmost resistances bearing excessive police brutality and atrocity against the land-grabbing policy of the left-led state government. In case of Singur more than 1000 acres fertile cultivated land was seized by the government to construct the Nano car factory of the Tata. On the other hand, at a stage of the Nandigram resistance, a fair number villagers-agitators including women and children lost their lives due to police firing. In both cases Trinamul Congress leader Mamta Banerjee (presently the chief minister of W.B) raised her voice against such displacement and police brutality. She gives a new dimension to ongoing land movement which gradually earned an all Indian character. Bhattacharyya justifiably observes, ‘From the historical point of view,

Nandigram elevated the struggle against displacement and the state-sponsored land-grand design to a qualitatively higher level. It showed a path that, although rooted in the anti-colonial struggle of the 1940s, was new and had elements from which the struggling people of other regions could learn. [43] Both in Singur and Nandigram the 'Bhoomi Uchhed Pratirodh Committees' (BUPCs) or the Committees to Resist Displacement from Land consisting of the affected villagers organized the movement against state machinery and corporate houses simultaneously.

The same fear of displacement from homesteads and forest land has played a vital role behind the Maoist-led tribal movement, took place in Lalgargh-Junglemahal region, West Midnapore, West Bengal. Again, in recent past, the farmers of greater Noida, western Uttar Pradesh made severe agitation against government led land acquisition program, required for extension of the express way. Above all, the forcible process of displacement and marginalization of the tribal rural people of India in the name of development continues in our times without any noticeable interruption. In fact, the coercive aspect of the state power has impoverished the people through their ecological, economic, cultural and political marginalization, which prepares the ground for a resistance and discontent movement, as we have mentioned earlier, at the grass roots against these modernizing and development projects. Resistance is seen mainly as a reflex action prompted by, being driven over the edge by economic and political deprivation. [44] In this context, we may mention the Ted Gurr's popular theory of deprivation-frustration-aggression. [45] By this time Maoist activities have expanded, especially in the central and eastern tribal belts of India, because the state has failed not only to protect the tribal land from the land grabbers but also to alleviate extreme poverty, permanent starvation deaths and remove hardship in the tribal heartland. [46] Thus 'these neglected tribal pockets have been transformed into spawning field of Maoist insurgency.' [47]

VI. Impact of Development Projects on Indigenous People of India and beyond

There are multiplied impacts of the development projects on the life and culture of the indigenous population, and most of the immediate and far reaching impacts are common irrespective of countries. Carnea has identified eight interlinked potential risks intrinsic to development particularly taking place in the developing countries. These are as follows.

1. **Landlessness:** Expropriation of land removes the main foundation upon which people's productive systems, commercial activities and livelihoods are constructed.
2. **Joblessness:** The risks of all losing wage employment are very high both in urban and rural displacements for those employed in enterprises, services or agriculture.
3. **Homelessness:** Loss of shelter tends to be only temporary for many people being resettled; but, for some, remains a lingering condition. In a broader cultural sense, loss of

a family's individual home and the loss of a group's cultural space tend to result in alienation and status deprivation.

4. **Marginalization:** Marginalization occurs when families lose economic power and spiral on a “downward mobility” path. Economic marginalization is often accompanied by social and psychological marginalization.

5. **Food Insecurity:** Forced uprooting increases the risks that people will fall into temporary chronic under nourishment, defined as calorie-protein intake levels below the minimum necessary for normal growth and work.

6. **Increased Morbidity and Mortality:** Displacement-induced social stress and psychological trauma, the use of unsafe water supply and impoverished sewage systems, increase vulnerability to epidemics and chronic diarrhea, dysentery and so on.

7. **Loss of Access to Common Property:** For poor people, loss of access to common property assets that belonged to relocated communities (pastures, forest lands, water bodies, burial grounds, and so on) result in significant deterioration in income and livelihood levels.

8. **Social Disintegration:** displacement causes a profound unraveling of existing patterns of social organization. This unraveling occurs at many levels. When people are forcibly moved, production systems, life-sustaining informal networks trade linkages, etc. are dismantled. [48]

Besides these, others have suggested the addition of other risks such as the loss of civil rights or abuse of human rights, such as loss of property without fair compensation, or violence from security forces, the loss of access to public services and so on. Sahoo observes in Indian context, ‘In a broader cultural sense, homelessness is also placelessness, loss of group's cultural space and identity, or cultural impoverishment.’ [49] In fact, to the indigenous peoples, loss of land can hardly be compensated. Bidu Lata Huika, one of the leaders of the ‘Orissa Tribal People's Forum’ firmly declares, ‘we are not interested in the compensation offered by the bauxite companies; we want to continue as farmers on this land which has sustained us for centuries.’ This spirit persists among the other land losers and marginalized peoples.

There is very little scope of doubt that displacement dismantles the existing socio-cultural fabric and century old economic base of the displaced families, which has been built over several generations. It disperses and fragments communities, dismantles patterns of social organization and interpersonal ties; kinship groups becomes scattered as well. This is a net loss of valuable ‘social capital’ that compounds the loss of natural, physical and human capital. [50] The National Commission of Women (NCW) in India's study vividly shows that the impact of displacement on women reveals that violence against women is increased. An increase in alcoholism due to displacement has led to a marked rise in domestic violence in India. Displacement and growing

marginalization has made men feel helpless or insecure and turned women and children into scapegoats.

The present India witnesses multitude unresolved cases of rehabilitation and resettlement of tribals and other wretched peoples who lose their lands due to development projects. The world is passing through same experiences. In India, the Adivasis or tribal people, although only representing eight percent of the total population, make up 40-50 percent of the displaced. In Nepal, indigenous groups recently displaced by a dam on the Kaligandaki River have lost their land and livelihood. Even it is reported that those people are inadequately compensated. The livelihood of an estimated 35,000 indigenous Ibaloi people is threatened by the construction of the San Roque Dam in the Philippines. Mon, Karen and Tavoyans in Myanmar are probably among the worst off, displaced by large infrastructure projects, subject to forced labour, and abuses by the military. [51] Recently in Bolivia local people are mobilizing resistances against ongoing deforestation for construction of high way which is creating gross displacement.

Again, as far as eastern and south-eastern India's mineral-bound tribal belt is concerned, the big companies like Essar steel are alleged to pay levies to the Maoist insurgents for the security of their projects which made the whole area and its ethnic communities vulnerable. [52] In this respect, social activists argue that 'mining and industrial activity in tribal regions not just supplies funds and firepower to insurgents, but also creates fresh ones, by edging out adivasis from their land, creating gated communities of outsiders, and deepening divides.' [53] In a sense, ethnic people, wild life, and as a whole environment now are in danger due to 'development terrorism'. The present researcher had been shocked when he saw huge tree falling damaging nature and consequent displacement at Lataguri and its adjacent forest zone in North Bengal, India in October 2011. It is happening in the name of development in two ways such as construction of railway through Garumara forest range and building up few large and luxurious hotels and resorts for urban tourists in midst of forest. We can remind that the entire forest area in Dooars is historically famous for its scenic beauty, wildlife, and ethnic peoples, but all three as far as their sustenance is concerned, is now in deep crisis.

VII. Hypothesis

The expansion of profit-oriented development, as designed by global economy and followed by the governments like Indian government rapidly worsened the conditions of the indigenous people including tribal and caused a great danger to the nature and environment and the traditional social structures in the present world. This one sided development along with its by-products such as displacement and eviction denied the fundamental rights, livelihood and sustenance, culture, land, common property, resources, employment and social networking of the tribal rural folks. The survival of these ethnic groups is at stake under the privatization-liberalization centered New Economic Policy in the countries like India. The governments should not just count 'gold coins' it will reap but also protect the interests of its people. In Indian perspective, far from getting their rights, Adivasis live with constant threat of eviction and marginalization.

Mining, plantation, dams and reservoirs, SEZs, metal factories are foisted on their lands and forests. Pinto [54] opines that the socio-economically marginalized citizens are asked to quit their habitation and livelihoods and the capitalists and MNCs from inside and outside land are provided all the facilities to grab all resources at the expense of the people, especially of the poor is both denial of sovereignty and betrayal of peoples right over their rights and lands. Peoples and social activists who are raising their voices in favour of the displaced tribal are usually targetted by the power houses. Amit Jethwa, a dedicated pro-tribal activist cum environmentalist was shot dead near the high court in Ahmedabad, Gujrat, India in July 2010 shortly after he has filed a case (PIL) against illegal mining in the Gir forest region in Gujrat. [55]

In conclusion, it may be observed that such a model of single sided development has brought two India, sharply divided whether we agree or not and the concept of an egalitarian society will always remain a chimera until and unless these two India is brought together. Thus government must bring in necessary reforms to safeguard the future of vulnerable lot. Proper rehabilitation must be given to these victimized sections. The government should initiate conciliatory move to build confidence between the project-affected persons (PAPs) and the state. Administration must restrain to act as the managing agent of the corporate houses who are setting up SEZs, and mining plants and steel factories especially in the tribal lands. Above all, people who are displaced should be properly compensated and rehabilitated and be considered them as a part of the development projects. If possible, in some cases they should be recognized as the shareholders of the company whereby, they will get the due justice. On the other hand, it is rightly stated that every developmental activity affects natural balance. [56] Managing the use of natural resources, development, protecting or conserving nature enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety by adopting methods that cause least imbalance or negative impact on nature.

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