

SIXTH SEMESTER (HONS)

PAPER: C14T/ UNIT-3

INDIAN TRIBES AND DISPLACEMENT

Introduction:

India is one of the emerging economies. A large number of development projects have been launched in India for the past six decades. It has gained momentum since the independence. Dam projects, Industrial projects, Mining Projects, Thermal Power Projects, and Urban Infrastructure Projects are some of the prime examples. India's development policies and strategies have often focused upon indispensability of irrigation as important input for agriculture. Large-Scale Irrigation Projects are important for higher agriculture growth, besides establishment of Industries and Power Projects. Today, India is considered as the third largest in dam building country in the World. It has over 3,600 large dams and over 700 more which are under construction (Mallavarapu, 2006).

It is important to note that most of the projects are located in the most backward Scheduled Areas of various tribal communities, as the forest and mountainous tracts, which are the traditional habitats of them endowed with rich minerals, resources, and abandoned flora and fauna. Most of the rivers originated and drain through several tribal regions. The resources, which are available in the tribal areas, are being perceived, by the policy makers, as the property of the Nation. As a consequence, land has been acquired in varying degree from very large number of people in the project area. In the name of development and of civilizing, assimilating and mainstreaming the tribal people, the affluent elites are evicting these poor people from their homes and land (Gadgil and Guha, 1995). Mega development projects like multipurpose river dams and large scale mining generate benefits for the few relatively better off sections of population while marginalizing and excluding the poorer tribal people (Oommen, 2004, 2006, 2008). In India alone, between 1951 and 1990 around 21.3 million persons were displaced by development projects. Among this number 8.54 million (40 per cent) were tribal or indigenous people and only 2.12 million (24.8 per cent) were resettled (Government of India, 2002: 458). According to the latest estimates, the total number of people displaced during the last 60 years has reached almost 60 million (Mathur, 2008: 3). These are the groups that have traditionally depended on the common property resource basically on forestland for their survival. There are a large number of tribals and other forest dwellers who come under the forest laws that do not give

any right of ownership to the cultivators even after several generations of occupancy and cultivation (Fernandes and Thukral, 1989). Displacement of these people means disturbance of their way of life, which automatically leads to destruction of their social, cultural, religious and economic traditions.

What is Displacement?

Displacement of people from traditional habitations causes much trauma to the affected people. Compulsory acquisition of land for construction of dams and roads, quarrying and mining operations, location of industries and reservation of forests for National Parks and environmental reasons forces tribal people to leave their traditional abodes and land – their chief means of livelihood.

A growing number of environmentalists and social activists have misgivings about development projects such as dams, industries, mines, railways and roads which impact people's livelihood in different ways. Some of them are displaced (DP) away from their homes. Some others lose most of their land and other sustenance but are not physically displaced and are called project-affected persons (PAP). Most projects count among the DPs/PAP only those who are deprived of their individual land. Most of those who are deprived of their community property resources (CPRs) or other livelihood such as service providers depending on the village as a community is rarely counted among them (Dhagamwar 1989: 192). Tribal livelihood is predominantly CPRs.

Types of Displacement:

There are two types of displacement:-

(1) **Displacement effected by natural disasters** is the forms of draughts, floods, earthquakes and cyclone;

(2) **Displacement due to developmental projects** like dams, mines, thermal power plants, industries, rail-ways, roads, ports and others.

Among these two, former is the one is not subject to human control but the latter is purely human made phenomena and this type of displacement is pre planned or forced displacement. In both the types of displacement, the victims are poor and weaker sections of the society who do not either have economic stability or educational accomplishments to migrate to safer areas. Today in India internal displacement concentrates a large share of people's wealth in the hands of few. In the process of 'development' there is '*disempowerment*' of the subalterns. The rich become richer and poor become much poorer due to explorative and dehumanizing strategies of the powerful.

Facts of Tribal Displacement:

India is one of the largest dam building nation in the world. There are 4,291 dams in India since India has got independence in 1947 it emerges that large dams are the single largest cause of displacement in India, SEZ or industrial development are the next major cause for displacement. *Development induced displacement can be defined as forcing the communities and individuals out of their homes, often also their homelands, for the purpose of economic development.* Displacement is not an economic issue alone, but is to a great extent a question of human rights. Besides, displacement and rehabilitation are to be viewed not as one time event but as process that begins as soon as the project is announced and continues for several years after persons are resettled. Further the standards of Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R and R) of people displaced by development projects have been vary poor in most cases. In the absence of adequate resettlement, most of the displaced people, and especially those belonging to disadvantaged social groups, have been reduced to poverty and destitution. The *Narmada Dam case* exemplifies displacement without proper rehabilitation. Thousands of people mostly tribal have been displaced due to the dams built across the River Narmada. More than 2,000 families displaced by the multipurpose Hirakulnd dam project in Sambalpur district of Orissa were not compensated as of February 2002.

Indian Scenario:

During recent years human rights and environmental activities have been taking note of displacement as major violation of the right to life, particularly of the poor and tribal people. Development projects every year involuntarily displace one million people in the developing countries from their land and homes. The question becomes more relevant when it concerns the tribals because they often adversely affected the environment making the life of the tribals more difficult and responsible for tribal migration. Even their health, food and nutrition of the tribals are also adversely affected.

A very conservative estimate indicates that during the last 50 years approximately 2 crore 13 lakh people have been displaced in the country owing to big projects such as mines, dams, industries, wild-life sanctuaries, field firing range etc. Of this, at least 40%, approximating 85 lakhs, are Indigenous Adivasi people. Of all the displaced, only one-fourth have been resettled. The remaining was given some cash compensation arbitrarily fixed by local administration and then neatly forgotten.

Nearly 85.39 lakh tribals had been displaced until 1990 on account of some mega projects or the other, reservation of forests as National Parks etc. Tribals constitute at least 55.16 percent of the total displaced people in the country. Cash payment does not really compensate the tribals for the difficulties they experience in their living style and ethos.

Table I.1: Number of DP/PAPs of Some States Where Studies Have Been Done*

State/Year Type	1951-1995				1947-2000		1947-04	65-95	Total
	Andhra Pradesh	Jharkhand	Kerala	Orissa	Assam	West Bengal	Gujarat	Goa	
Water	1865471	232968	133846	800000	448812	1723990	2378553	18680	7602320
Industry	539877	87896	222814	158069	57732	403980	140924	3110	1614402
Mines	100541	402882	78	300000	41200	418061	4128	4740	1271630
Power	87387	NA	2556	NA	7400	146300	11344	0	254987
Defence	33512	264353	1800	NA	50420	119009	2471	1255	472820
Environment	135754	509918	14888	107840	265409	784952	26201	300	1845262
Transport	46671	0	151623	NA	168805	1164200	1356076	20190	2907565
Refugees	NA	NA	0	NA	283500	500000	646	Nil	784146
Farms	NA	NA	6161	NA	113889	110000	7142	1745	238937
Hum Res.	NA	NA	14649	NA	90970	220000	16343	8500	350462
Health	NA	NA	NA	NA	23292	84000	NA	1850	109142
Admin	NA	NA	NA	NA	322906	150000	7441	3220	483567
Welfare	37560	0	2472	NA	25253	720000	20470	NA	805755
Tourism	0	0	343	0	0	0	26464	640	27447
Urban	103310	0	1003	NA	1241	400000	85213	1750	592517
Others	265537	50000	0	100000	18045	0	15453	840	449875
Total	3215620	1548017	552233	1465909	1918874	6944492	4098869	66820	19810834

Sources: AP, Fernandes et al. 2001: 89; Assam, Fernandes & Bharali 2006: 107; Goa, Fernandes & Naik 2001: 55; Gujarat, Lobo & Kumar 2007: 99; Jharkhand, Ekka & Asif 2000: 97; Kerala, Muricken et al. 2003: 189; Orissa, Fernandes & Asif 1997: 130; Bengal, Fernandes et al. 2006: 123.

Table I.2: Caste-Tribe of DP/PAPs from Some States

State	Tribals	%	Dalits	%	Others	%	NA	%	Total
Andhra Pradesh	970654	30.19	628824	19.56	1467286	45.63	148856	04.63	3215620
Assam	416321	21.80	NA	NA	609015	31.90	893538	46.30	1918874
Goa	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	66820	100	66820
Gujarat	1821283	44.43	462626	11.29	1791142	43.70	23818	0.58	4098869
Jharkhand	620372	40.08	212892	13.75	676575	43.71	38178	02.47	1548017
Kerala	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	552233	100	552233
Orissa	616116	40.38	178442	11.64	671351	48.01	0	0	1465909
West Bengal	1330663	19.16	1689607	24.33	2566223	36.95	1357999	19.55	6944492
Total	5775409	29.15	3172391	16.01	7781592	39.28	3081442	15.55	19810834

Sources: Ekka & Asif 2000: 99; Fernandes et al. 2001: 89; Fernandes & Bharali 2006: 108; Fernandes & Naik 2001; Lobo & Kumar 2007: 99; Muricken et al. 2003: 189; Fernandes & Asif 1997: 87; Fernandes et al. 2006: 91.

Scenario of West Bengal:

The scenario in West Bengal is not much different. At independence West Bengal had to face the challenge of rehabilitating the East Pakistan Partition refugees. State's draconian law in 1948, post-1947 need of connecting North-East with the rest of the country, Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 and Bangladesh War in 1971 all have paved the way for land acquisition and refugee infiltration (Fernandes et. al 2012:94). In more recent period, particularly since the adoption of a liberalized economic policy by the Central Government, quite a good number of development projects have been launched by the West Bengal Government and many more will be coming up in near future. The building up of a new township near Kolkata and the establishment of industries in the rural areas of West Bengal including a port centered industrial complex at Haldia in the Purba Medinipur district constitute the recent development package of the Government of West Bengal (Guha, 2007).

It is to be noted that in West Bengal some industrial and infrastructural development projects have already been established and many projects are in progress. The areas are Durgapur and Asansol of Burdwan district, Power Projects at Santaldihi and Bagmundi in Puruliya District, DVC irrigation and flood control project in Jalpaiguri and north Dinajpur District. Township at Darjeeling district, Buxa Tiger Reserve at Jalpaiguri district and the Iron and steel industry in West Midnapore district are few other examples. Some tea-garden in north Bengal (Jalpaiguri and north Dinajpur Districts) also is related to this matter. For the successful implementation of this development policy large scale acquisition of land has already been taken place in West Bengal, which displaced quite a good number of small and marginal farmers.

In most these areas tribal families possessed agricultural land which they had to leave for the sake of development. In an article published in 1989, Walter Fernandes and his co-workers have shown that for Durgapur Steel Plant in Bardhaman district of West Bengal 6,633.44 hectares of land was acquired, which displaced 11,300 persons, 3.39 percent of whom were tribals (Fernandes et al. 1989). They have also shown that there were 114 coal mines up to 1983, which roughly have displaced as many as 1, 57, 320 persons in West Bengal. Many of them have been evacuated from their homestead and agricultural land and many others are living with the fear of loss. People from concerned areas are apprehending that they are likely to be displaced from their own homestead and agricultural land as soon as some of the project starts which are in the reckoning. They would become homeless, landless agricultural day-labourer which would result to more poverty and misery on their part. Interestingly, no published statistics on displaced (DP) and project affected persons (PAP), let alone their caste/tribe affiliation, are available from

any official source of Government of West Bengal. In fact, displacement and rehabilitation within the have not yet entered into the official agenda of the Government of West Bengal. Out of this apprehension they themselves have consolidated, demonstrating resistance against the industrial, irrigational, power, road and other commercial or infrastructural projects in different corners of the State. At this juncture, it is extraordinarily significant to make an appraisal on the Indian tribal situation.

Impact of Displacement:

Land is the center of tribal life. The effects of the displacement spill over generations in many ways such as loss of traditional means of employment (livelihood), change of environment, disrupted community life and relationship, marginalization, a profound psychological trauma. It destroys the existing modes of production affects kinship and impoverishment and threatens cultural identity of tribal and ethnic minorities. In addition forced resettlement tends to be associated with increased socio-cultural and psychological stresses and higher morbidity and mortality rates. Population displacement, therefore, disrupts economic and socio cultural structures.

The development process pushes them from an informal to a formal economy that is new to them without any preparation. They had depended on agricultural land and forests, both of which they lose to the project. When they receive compensation it is monetary with which most communities living in the informal economy are not familiar. As mentioned above in most cases the CPRs are not compensated.

On the basis of various empirical studies conducted on the tribal displaced families of India, the following are some of the important impacts that have been revealed from the analysis of data by the researcher:

1. Decline in Joint Family System:

The predisplacement level of 40 nuclear and 60 joint families was changed into 74 and 26 respectively with both tribal and non-tribal families showing the same trend of breaking down of joint family to nuclear families. This is a general feature noticed in most of the development projects like MCL.

2. Landlessness:

India being a farm dominated society with agriculture as the main occupation, displacement from land, removes the main foundation on which people's productive systems, commercial activities and livelihood are based. Unless this foundation is reconstructed elsewhere or replaced by steady income-generating employment, landlessness sets in and the affected

families are impoverished. In most of the cases/ projects, land for land, norm could not be followed. But cash compensation is inadequate to make up for the loss of land. This impact has serious implication in the current project under study and therefore needs special consideration by the project implementing agencies in general and the policy makers formulating strategies for the impacted people of development projects at government level.

3. *Joblessness and increase in the proportion of workers:*

When people were displaced from their habitat, they lose their means of livelihood. Creation of new jobs or alternative sources of income for them becomes very difficult since the oustees do not possess any skill to learn new methods of earning their livelihood. Hence those who were owners of the means of production before displacement have now become daily wage earners. In the Ib Valley Project, taken up for the study, though the MCL authorities followed the policy of providing a job to each displaced family, the other members of the displaced families remained jobless. The policy also discriminated against the landless labourers, artisans, share croppers and petty businessmen among others.

4. *Homelessness:*

Loss of house and shelter may be only temporary during the transition period for most of the displaced. But for some, homelessness remains a permanent feature. The project authorities in Ib Valley only provided homestead plots while the displaced persons have themselves built their houses. Again when a split occurs in the family, those who leave the family become homeless.

5. *Food insecurity:*

The tribal communities from whom this land is alienated are thus deprived of all their livelihood because most of them live in a natural resource based informal economy that depends on the one hand on agriculture, both settled and jhum and on the other on the non-timber forest (NTFP) such as medicinal herbs, edible flowers, leaves and fruits. They also get their small timber and firewood from the forest. Hence development is bound to affect their agricultural and forest land which is the primary source of their livelihood. Forced displacement increases the risk of chronic food insecurity. In India, crops are grown to provide food to the family while vegetables are grown in the kitchen gardens that take care of the food needs of the family. Surplus is also sold in the market. But forced displacements deprive the oustees from their former resource of livelihood rendering them landless. Even when homestead land was provided, the oustees could not properly reclaim and level the hilly area. In the Ib Valley project, the displaced families have to buy everything including food items from the market. Another source

of livelihood is animal husbandry. They have a natural propensity to rear animals like pigs, goats, cows etc. During our field visit we saw that every family has cows and bullocks. The latter are used for ploughing. Fishing is another source of income, mainly practised by women who get much of their sustenance from the river. They go to the local hats (markets) to sell their homegrown vegetables and other produce.

6. *Loss of access to common property:*

For the poor people, particularly, the landless and otherwise asset less people, loss of access to common property (forest lands, water bodies, grazing land, etc.) leads to a major deterioration in their income and livelihood levels. Such lost resources are rarely compensated by the Government in the relocation sites. There are also frequent conflicts between the host population and new settlers over the use of forest land and other government land. As a result, the resettler do not get fuel wood and other minor forest produce, which they used to collect from the forests in their old habitat.

7. *Social Disintegration:*

Forced displacement tears apart the social fabric of the oustees. Production systems are dismantled, kinship groups and family systems are often scattered and cultural identity of the people is under threat. Social and community networks that help people to cope with poverty through exchange of food and clothing, mutual help with farming, building houses and caring children are disrupted. Social disintegration has been a major impoverishment risk in all the projects undertaken. In the Ib Valley Project, the mutual help arrangement and other socio-economic relationships have been totally disrupted.

8. *Increased Morbidity and Mortality:*

Loss of ancestral and homestead land, less no access to health care facilities, the psychological trauma caused thereby and the food insecurity together often leads to serious diseases. There is also the danger of parasitic and vector born diseases in the relocated sites because of unsafe water, poor sewerage etc. In fact, lack of food, unhygienic living and environmental degradation in the new place were found in the project area to have a serious impact on the health of the oustees. In the Ib Valley project, pollution caused by coal dust and frequent blasting has caused skin diseases, eye irritation, gastric disorders, diarrhoea and other ailments. Though medical centers have been opened in the resettlement colony they are dysfunctional in the absence of the doctors.

The findings of empirical study in the project resettlement areas and the analysis of the empirical data gathered from the study reveals that the following situation prevails in the

resettlement area and to the displaced people in general and the tribal displaced families in particular (as majority of the sample households were tribals):

- The general socio-economic condition of the oustees has deteriorated significantly.
- Socio-economic inequalities have widened.
- The cropping pattern has changed drastically.
- Dependence on trees and livestock has reduced substantially.
- Increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers.
- Increasing trend towards nuclear family.
- Poor dwelling conditions of the oustees.
- Improper use of compensation money.
- Rise in the incidence of indebtedness.
- Drastic reduction in the socio-economic condition of women in the PAFs.

The following are some of the critical areas of concern which the researcher has flagged to be considered by the policy makers and the project resettlement agencies to look into for improving the socio-economic condition of the displaced tribal families in particular in Ib Valley Coal Mine project and in all take precautionary measures so that the such issues do not figure in case of the ongoing and pipe line projects.

a) Lack of basic amenities: - Most of the development projects failed to provide basic amenities to the displaced people, which is a critical area of concern.

b) Non-availability of wage work: Avenues of wage work are severely restricted in the resettlement colonies, forcing many oustees to migrate to places outside the district and even the State.

c) Decline in the Role of Women and Relationship in the Family: Women play a vital role in the family, community and society. But after displacement, their income has either dwindled or has come to a halt altogether. They have become totally dependent on their husbands or sons for household expenditure. This made their role and status very limited.

d) The cordial and intimate relationship of the pre-displacement period is now disrupted. Decrease in family income have created conflicts and bitterness among them.

e) Problems arising out of cash compensation: Most of the project authorities pay cash compensation to the PAFs, which is often misutilised by the male members on consumer durable items or liquor. Increased alcoholism has led to a rise in crimes in these areas.

f) Increasing difficulties in arranging marriage for Daughters: Women oustees now face great difficulty in getting married because of the demand for more dowry. Use of cash compensation on the marriages leave the family pauperized.

Conclusion:

Displacement of people from traditional habitats causes much trauma to the affected persons. Compulsory acquisition of land for construction of dams and roads, quarrying and mining operations, industries and reservation of forests for National Parks and environment protection forces people to leave their traditional abodes and land – their main sustenance. Thus, development projects have often become a major threat to the people whom they deprive of their traditional livelihood without alternatives. Tribals are the worst sufferers since most development projects such as dams and industries are located in inaccessible tribal areas. Nearly 50-60 million people have been displaced by development projects in India as a whole and tribals constitute at least 40% percent of them. Cash payment does not really compensate the tribals for the difficulties they experience in their lifestyle and ethos. Displacement can lead to violation of the Fifth Schedule* as it deprives them of control and ownership of natural resources and land essential for their way of life. The present paper will try to see the impact of such development on the traditional livelihood of the people thus affected and specially the tribals. Special focus will be on the proposed Pagladia dam in the Nalbari district of Asom that will displace around 105,000 people, 90% of them tribals.

Development and displacement has direct link with STs Population. The government should formulate the plans and polices for resettlement of these people on the priority basis. But the paradox of the institution is that government is paying little action to resettlement plans and policies of the land ousters. The resistance is largely due to State's failure to provide adequate compensation to the land holders and unable to ensure resettlement and rehabilitation of ousters. Absence of redressal mechanism in every State, alienated communication turn to extremist political ideologies meioses violence of Central Government is apolitical expression of violence against forcible acquisition of land.
