



Indigenous Displacement in India: A Tragic Tale of Uprooted Lives and the Battle for Hasdeo's Heart

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Abstract: In a world dominated by commodification, the Adivasi people uniquely revere nature as a sacred entity, viewing it as a nurturing 'mother.' This paper scrutinizes the ethical implications of developmental initiatives in Adivasi lands, revealing the detrimental impact on their health and well-being. The Indian government's resource exploitation without genuine concern for Adivasi's suffering underscores a skewed development paradigm. Development-induced displacement exacerbates social and human development challenges, necessitating alternatives and internalization of rehabilitation costs. Grassroots participation and adherence to constitutional provisions can mitigate displacement's negative aspects.

The focus then shifts to the plight of India's tribal communities, constituting 8.6% of the population but comprising 40% of those displaced by 'development.' A case study of the Hasdeo forest resistance against the Adani Group's coal mine illustrates a David vs Goliath scenario, highlighting political complexities and the clash between economic interests and environmental concerns. Allegations of illegal land acquisition, disregard for tribal councils, and ecological damage raise ethical questions, emphasizing the need for land acquisition reform, ethical business practices and global recognition of indigenous rights for sustainable development.

Keywords: Adivasi, Development-induced displacement, Tribal resistance, Environmental conservation

Received : 18 April 2024

Revised : 27 May 2024

Accepted : 16 June 2024

Published : 29 June 2024

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

S.N. Tripathy (2024). Indigenous Displacement in India: A Tragic Tale of Uprooted Lives and the Battle for Hasdeo's Heart, *Society and Culture Development in India*, 4: 1, pp. 169-183. <https://doi.org/10.47509/SCDI.2024.v04i01.11>

Introduction

In a world where everything is treated as a commodity, the Adivasi people stand out by continuing to respect and treat nature as a sacred entity. They view nature as 'mother' who provides for their needs and those of the wider human family. The

Adivasi people's health and well-being are negatively impacted by this exploitation, and yet the government appears to show little concern. It seems that their main goal is to extract as many natural resources as possible without regard for the Adivasis' suffering. Big businesses and corporate families are solely focused on profit and show little concern for the Adivasis' genuine development. The empirical perspective on the worldwide and most definitely in the Indian context, as has been told earlier, reveals a bias in the development discourse, one which has posited the individual and the investor at its helm and on account of which development as we know it, is inherently ill-suited to promote human and social development, as was and is being envisaged. Thus, we face a paradox wherein endeavors to promote the one human right (Development) furnishes to the violation (Displacement) of another. "Development-induced displacement is the forcing of communities and individuals out of their homes, often also their homelands, for the ostensible purpose of social and human development, but which is nothing more than "economic growth" and the benefits accruing from such almost never if ever percolate down to the one's that bear its costs."

Review of Literature

A review of scholarly articles pertaining to the theme of our study illuminates several dimensions of the subject matter and serves as a valuable foundation for our current research. In light of this, we have chosen to highlight a number of crucial studies below that explore the importance and relevance of our current work.

Fernandes and Raj's (1992) book, "Development, displacement, and Rehabilitation in the Tribal Areas of Orissa," explores the impacts of development-induced displacement on tribal communities in the Indian state of Odisha. The authors examined several case studies of development projects in the region, including dams, mines, and industries, and analyze the ways in which these projects affected local communities. They argue that these projects have often resulted in forced displacement, loss of land and livelihoods, and the erosion of traditional tribal cultures and practices.

Thukral's (1996) article titled "Development, Displacement and Rehabilitation: Locating Gender" published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* focuses on the gendered impacts of development-induced displacement and rehabilitation efforts in India.

Thukral argues that displacement and rehabilitation processes are often gender-blind and fail to account for the differential impacts on women and men. Women, she notes, often face additional burdens and challenges, such as loss of livelihoods,

increased care responsibilities, and increased vulnerability to violence. The article draws on case studies from different parts of India to illustrate these gendered impacts and highlights the need for greater attention to gender in development planning and rehabilitation efforts. Thukral argues that gender analysis should be integrated into all aspects of development planning and implementation, from needs assessments to project design and evaluation.

Balgovind Baboo (1996), in his paper, examines the experiences of communities affected by the Hirakud Dam project in India, which involved the displacement of thousands of people from their homes and lands. Baboo analyzes the policies and practices of the state and the responses of affected communities to the project and draws lessons for future development projects.

Satyanarayan (1999) highlights the detrimental impacts of displacement, including loss of livelihoods, cultural displacement, social dislocation and psychological trauma. It also examines the rehabilitation policies and programs in place in India and assesses their effectiveness in addressing the needs of those affected by displacement.

Mathur (2000) examines the role of voluntary organizations in addressing the challenges of involuntary resettlement in India. Mathur highlights the importance of participatory approaches that involve affected communities in the planning and implementation of resettlement efforts. He also emphasizes the need for greater collaboration between government agencies, voluntary organizations, and other stakeholders in the resettlement process.

Rew Alan et al. (2000) discuss the challenges associated with development-induced displacement and resettlement projects, which involve the forced relocation of communities due to large-scale development projects such as dams, mines, and highways. The paper highlights the policy constraints that contribute to these failures, including inadequate legal frameworks, weak institutional capacities, and insufficient community participation.

Cemea (2000) presents a conceptual framework for analyzing the risks of impoverishment associated with population displacement and resettlement, particularly in the context of large-scale development projects. Cemea argues that the risks of impoverishment are often underestimated or overlooked in resettlement planning, which can lead to negative social and economic impacts for affected communities. The author highlights the importance of engaging affected communities in decision-making processes related to resettlement and the need for effective coordination among stakeholders, including government agencies, development organizations, and civil society groups.

Patabardhan (2000) examines the impact of large dams on tribal communities in India, who are often among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in the country. He argues that the construction of large dams in India has had significant social, economic, and environmental impacts on these communities, including loss of land, livelihoods and cultural heritage.

Koenig (2001) examines the issue of development-induced displacement and resettlement and the ways in which it can lead to impoverishment and social dislocation for affected communities. Koenig argues that traditional approaches to resettlement, which focus on providing compensation and physical relocation, are insufficient to address the complex social and economic challenges faced by displaced communities. The paper proposes an alternative approach to resettlement, which emphasizes the importance of promoting local development and mitigating the impacts of displacement on affected communities.

Akhil B. Ota (2001) examines the challenges faced by families who are displaced by development projects and the factors that contribute to the failure of efforts to reconstruct their livelihoods. Ota argues that the failure to address the needs and concerns of displaced families can lead to long-term social, economic, and environmental impacts on affected communities. The author proposes a set of policy recommendations to address these issues and promote more effective livelihood reconstruction efforts, including the need for greater community participation in project planning and decision-making, improved compensation and resettlement policies, and the provision of adequate resources and services to support the livelihoods of displaced families.

McDowell (2002) argues that involuntary resettlement can have significant negative impacts on the livelihoods of affected communities, particularly when resettlement is not properly planned or implemented. She highlights the importance of a sustainable livelihoods approach in addressing these challenges, which involves supporting affected communities in rebuilding their livelihoods in the wake of resettlement.

W. Courtland Robinson (2003) discusses the issue of development-induced displacement, which refers to the forced relocation of communities due to large-scale development projects such as dams, mines, and highways. Robinson argues that such projects often result in negative social, economic, and environmental impacts on affected communities, including loss of land, livelihoods, and cultural heritage.

Satpathy et al. (2002) examine the role of women in the struggles against development-induced displacement in the Indian states of Orissa and Jharkhand.

They argue that women are often disproportionately affected by displacement, as they are often responsible for household and agricultural work, which may be disrupted or lost due to displacement. The paper draws on case studies of specific struggles against displacement and highlights the active role of women in these struggles, including their leadership in protests and their contributions to organizing and mobilizing communities. The authors argue that women's participation is crucial for the success of these struggles and that their perspectives and experiences must be considered in the development planning process.

Mishra (2010) focuses on the Hirakud dam project, which displaced thousands of tribal people from their homes and lands. The article provides a detailed analysis of the impact of displacement on the affected communities, including the loss of livelihoods, traditional practices, and cultural identity. The study argues that the government's top-down approach to development and rehabilitation failed to consider the needs and aspirations of the tribal communities, leading to their marginalization and impoverishment.

Justification of the Present Study

It is inferred from the review of various pieces of literature that displacement is not a one-time incident but a problem that leads to a series of interconnected consequences affecting different aspects of the lives of the affected individuals and communities. Displacement has significant impacts on the economic, social, cultural, psychological, and political spheres of life. It is a complex issue that needs to be addressed with sensitivity and care. In brief, the literature review highlights the multifaceted nature of displacement, its severe impact on different aspects of life, and the need for comprehensive and sensitive planning and implementation of resettlement measures. Despite the plethora of studies conducted so far, there has not been a study that comprehensively examines the juxtaposition of the Parsa East Kete Basan (PEKB) coal mine and the Hasdeo forest, paints a vivid picture of the stark choices faced by the residents of Hariharpur. Hence, there is a rationale for the current study.

Objectives and Methodology

Based on the above backdrop, the present research paper has the following objectives:

- (i) Investigate the impact of development-induced displacement on Adivasi communities, focusing on the Hasdeo forest case, and assess the government's response and corporate involvement.

- (ii) To mitigate negative consequences and promote sustainable development for indigenous populations and to Propose alternatives and reforms in land acquisition procedures, emphasizing grassroots participation.

Displacement of Tribes

The tribal or the Scheduled Tribe communities constitute only 8.6% of India's population, and yet, they are around 40% of those displaced due to 'development' projects. During a raging debate on the new Land Acquisition Ordinance, a new report brings out many such paradoxes of development versus displacement of India's indigenous or Adivasi people. The report exposes the anomalies of land alienation, displacement and forced migration faced disproportionately by the tribal communities.

The Report of the High-Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India says that around 25% of India's tribals become displaced persons (DP) or project-affected persons (PAP) at least once in a lifetime because their regions are rich in natural resources. The government-appointed Expert Group on Prevention of Alienation of Tribal Land and its Restoration had estimated earlier that, of the total number of people displaced due to development projects, 47% were tribals.

The study relies on secondary data sources, examining publications related to the Hasdeo forest case. This includes an analysis of reports from the High-Level Committee and Expert Group, as well as an exploration of the broader context of displacement. Out of the total of 9153 families displaced by the 30 medium irrigation projects, there were 4557 tribal families (49.78 per cent) (Table 1). The displacement of tribal families in medium irrigation projects is depicted in Table 5. In all the 30 medium irrigation projects, 4557 tribal families were displaced out of a total of 9153. In such projects, tribal displacement was 49.78 per cent. As the projects are medium, the individual projects do not show large displacements in terms of absolute number. The highest number of 636 tribal families was displaced out of the total of 695 in the case of the Rukura Project. On the contrary, the lowest number of one tribal family was displaced in the Remal Medium Irrigation Projects. The other projects, such as Baghua, Dadroghati, Ramial and Sunei, displaced 144, 133, 285 and 267 tribal families, respectively. Tribal displacement was 100 per cent in the case of the Sundar project, while in absolute numbers, it is only 30 families.

Table 1: Displacement of Tribal Families in Major Irrigation Projects

<i>Sl. No</i>	<i>Name of the Project</i>	<i>Total No. of families displaced/affected</i>	<i>No. of ST families displaced/affected</i>	<i>Percentage of ST families displaced/affected</i>
1	Subarnarekha			
a)	Jambhira dam	2567	133	5.18
b)	Haldia dam	615	366	59.51
c)	Baura dam	2032	1701	83.71
d)	Ichha dam	3830	3152	82.30
2	Ong	3977	2049	51.52
3	Lower Indra	6181	1314	21.25
4	Lower Suktel	4160	1255	30.16
5	Kanupur	3617	2243	62.01
6	Manjore	1065	192	18.02
7	Rengali Irrigation	1009	10	0.99
	Total	29053	12415	42.73

Source: (i) Dalua, A.K. 1993. *Development Projects and Produced Displacement*, Cuttack Mass Media (P) Ltd.
(ii) Nayak, A.C. (ed.) (2013) *Irrigation in Odisha*, Cuttack: Water and Land Management Institute.
(iii) Govt. of Odisha (2014). *Status of Resettlement & Rehabilitation in Completed and Ongoing Irrigation*, Bhubaneswar: Office of Engineer-in-Chief, Odisha.

Table 2: Displacement of Tribal Families in Medium Irrigation Projects

<i>Sl. No</i>	<i>Name of the Project</i>	<i>Total No. of families displaced/affected</i>	<i>No. of ST families displaced/affected</i>	<i>Percentage of ST families displaced/affected</i>
1.	Baghua	1522	144	9.46
2.	Dadroghati	429	133	31.00
3.	Ramial	743	285	38.4
4.	Sunei	353	267	75.6
5.	Hariharjone	820	213	26.00
6.	Upper Jonk	506	374	73.91
7.	Telengiri	601	454	75.54
8.	Chheligada	371	311	83.82
9.	Ret	583	227	38.93
10.	Rukura	695	636	91.51
11.	Saipala	12	12	100
12.	Pitamahal	68	55	81.00
13.	Ghodahad	68	65	95.50
14.	Khadkei	118	52	44.00
15.	Kalo	214	169	79.40
16.	Gohira	143	74	51.74
17.	Pilasalki	185	104	56.21
18.	Sarafgarh	29	15	52.00

19.	Talasara	85	19	22.00
20.	Jharabandh	128	14	10.93
21.	Daha	20	7	35.00
22.	Dumerbahal	253	156	61.66
23.	Kansbahal	196	153	78.00
24.	Bankabahal	282	149	53.00
25.	Sundar	30	30	100.00
26.	Remal	5	1	20.00
27.	Baghalali	120	92	76.66
28.	Harabhangi	226	216	95.57
29.	Kanjhari	197	82	41.62
30.	Kuanria	151	48	31.78
	Total	9153	4557	49.78

Source: (i) Dalua, A.K. 1993. *Development Projects and Induced Displacement*, Cuttack Mass Media (P) Ltd.
(ii) Nayak, A.C. (ed.) (2013) *Irrigation in Odisha*, Water and Land Management Institute, Cuttack.
(iii) Govt. of Odisha (2014). *Status of Resettlement & Rehabilitation in Completed and Ongoing Irrigation*, Bhubaneswar: Office of Engineer-in-Chief, Odisha.

Referring to table 2, when we look at the compensation paid to the displaced families which includes the tribals, it presents a sordid picture. In case of Hirakud Dam, the compensation paid was inadequate and the living condition in resettled colonies was not up to the mark. The Kuanria Irrigation Project provides a different story. The Government, as per the compensation package, provided six acres of agriculture land and 20 decimal plots. Subsequently, it was discovered that lands were in forest area and displaced families did not get patta for the allotted land even after two and a half decades. In some of the projects like Baghalati Medium Irrigation Project, the people were not properly rehabilitated. As the tribal families have not been paid adequate and proper compensation, agitations are noticed time and again even after several decades of displacement.

Table 3: Estimate of tribals and other people displaced by developmental projects in India during 1951-1990 (in lakhs)

Type of project	All DPs	%	Tribal in DPs	% of tribals
Dams	164.0	77	63.21	38.5
Mines	25.5	12	13.30	52.2
Industry	12.5	5.9	3.13	25.0
Wildlife	6.0	2.8	4.5	75.0
Others	5.6	2.3	1.25	25.0
Total	213.0	100	85.39	40.0

Source: Fernandes, 1997

Table 3 shows that more than 20 million people were displaced in India during 1951-1990. Most of them were displaced by the dams i.e., 77 percent of total DPs, next 12 percent by mines, 5.9 percent by industry, 2.8 percent by wildlife and 2.3 percent by other activities.

Resisting Adani: The Battle for Hasdeo's Heart

The latest year-long protest by Chhattisgarh tribes against the Adani Group's coal mine in the heart of India's central jungles is a compelling tale of resistance and environmental advocacy. The clash between the indigenous communities and the corporate giant represents a David vs Goliath scenario, with the fate of the pristine Hasdeo forest hanging in the balance. The juxtaposition of the Parsa East Kete Basan (PEKB) coal mine and the Hasdeo forest paints a vivid picture of the stark choices the residents of Hariharpur face. On one side, the relentless expansion of the coal mine, and on the other, the invaluable expanse of the "lungs of Chhattisgarh." The forest, spanning 170,000 hectares, represents a unique ecosystem and houses the proposed Lemru Elephant Reserve.

The resilience of the tribal villagers in Hariharpur, who have resisted the coal mine for over a decade, is admirable and reflective of their deep connection to the land. Despite warnings from the government's forest research agency about potential ecological damage, the project received final clearances, sparking an indefinite agitation since March 2, 2022.

What adds an intriguing layer to this struggle is the involvement of the Congress-led Chhattisgarh government. This party has often criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP for allegedly favoring the Adani Group. This paradox highlights the complexity of political dynamics and the clash between economic interests and environmental concerns. The makeshift tent at the entrance to Hariharpur symbolizes the epicenter of the ongoing tribal protests. Daily sit-ins, joined by villagers from nearby hamlets like Fatehpur, Ghatbarra, and Salhi, convey a peaceful yet resolute resistance. The weekly mobilizations, with hundreds of chanting slogans urging Adani to "go back," illustrate the indigenous communities' sustained commitment to their fight to preserve their land and heritage.

The Chhattisgarh tribes' struggle serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges encountered by indigenous populations globally as they grapple with the encroachment of industrialization on their ancestral territories. The outcome of this David vs Goliath battle will impact the immediate stakeholders and resonate in the broader discourse on environmental conservation and corporate responsibility. The

Hasdeo forest, often called the “lungs of Chhattisgarh,” spans 170 sq km (656.3 sq miles), representing a vital ecosystem and home to the proposed Lemru Elephant Reserve. The ongoing dispute between the Chhattisgarh tribes and the Adani Group over a new coal mine has brought to light allegations of illegal land acquisition and a clash between environmental preservation and economic interests.

Muneshwar Singh Porte, a Hasdeo Arand Bachao Sangharsh Samiti resistance group member, has accused authorities of acquiring land illegally through forged documents. The Chhattisgarh government has not responded to these allegations, while the Adani Group maintains that its operations adhere to legal standards. The issue revolves around the assertion that village councils’ or Gram Sabhas’ views, mandatory for consideration in tribal areas like Hasdeo Arand, were violated or sidestepped during the land acquisition process. Residents from at least three villages have petitioned for an investigation into these violations, and the documents obtained by the BBC are part of an appeal in the Supreme Court against land and environmental clearances.

The protesters argue that the forests hold cultural significance, with Ramlal Karyam stating that “mining will destroy our ancient traditions and way of life.” The resistance has faced challenges, including surveillance, as the forest has become a monitored zone. Supporters of mining development within the community, albeit a minority, emphasize the need for progress, with Keshav Singh Porte stating, “For there to be progress, there will have to be some destruction.” While some locals employed by the Adani Group attest to positive developments, including schools and healthcare facilities, activists allege that these initiatives attempt to sway the community and prevent the resistance from escalating. Prominent figures like Rahul Gandhi and Rakesh Tikait have expressed disagreement with the mining decision, and the Congress party has written to the federal government requesting a rollback. However, social activist Alok Shukla sees these actions as delaying tactics, pointing out that the state government has the constitutional right to withdraw clearances without federal permission.

Despite the Supreme Court’s refusal to stay the project, the protesters remain confident, viewing their fight not just for Hasdeo but for the more considerable global challenge of climate change and environmental degradation. Upcoming elections, political pressures, and concerns about energy security during a looming hot summer heighten the situation’s complexity. The outcome of this David vs Goliath battle will undoubtedly shape the discourse on environmental conservation and sustainable Development. The government’s alleged violation of tribal councils’ views and accusations of illegal land acquisition intensifies the negative consequences. The

potential ecological damage, despite warnings, raises concerns about the project's long-term impact on the unique ecosystem and Lemru Elephant Reserve.

The involvement of the Congress-led Chhattisgarh government, paradoxically supporting the project, exposes the complexity of political dynamics, further eroding trust in political accountability. The ongoing dispute signifies a broader global challenge for indigenous populations facing encroachment on their ancestral territories, underlining the urgent need for reform in land acquisition procedures, ethical business practices, and global recognition of indigenous rights to mitigate environmental conservation and sustainable Development.

Measures taken by The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken cognizance of the displacement issues encountered by tribals, particularly Scheduled Tribes, who were allegedly internally displaced from Chhattisgarh due to the Salwa Judum movement. Human rights lawyer Radhakanta Tripathy, representing the affected tribals, submitted a plea to the NHRC, highlighting that these displaced individuals are deprived of social welfare benefits. The Salwa Judum, a group of tribal individuals mobilized against the outlawed armed CPI (Maoist), faced both support and backlash from the government machinery in Chhattisgarh. As a result, a significant number of tribals have been living in forest areas across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha for more than two decades without access to essential social welfare schemes such as job cards, ration cards, health insurance cards, and potable drinking water.

In response to the plea, the NHRC has directed the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and six State governments to provide detailed information on the victims of Salwa Judum and their current conditions. This move aims to mitigate the plight of the displaced tribals and ensure they receive the benefits and support they are entitled to. Simultaneously, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has issued a notice to the government regarding the dire situation of lakhs of scheduled tribe people displaced by various projects in different districts of Odisha. Activist and lawyer Radhakanta Tripathy, who filed the petition, highlighted issues related to the displacement of tribals in almost every district of the state due to dam, irrigation, and industrial projects.

The NCST has requested a comprehensive report from the Chief Secretary within a month, seeking details on the displacement of tribals, especially in the undivided Koraput district, where tribal displacement reaches 58% of the total

population. Similar challenges are observed in other districts, with significant percentages of scheduled tribe families being displaced due to various development projects, such as major irrigation projects and dam constructions. Advocate Tripathy emphasized that the projects have not benefited the tribals, and the problems faced by the displaced individuals are often overlooked. He urged the NCST to establish a separate commission to resolve the grievances of the displaced people. He suggested forming a committee to study the situation and make recommendations for the government to resolve it effectively. With Odisha having a substantial tribal population, constituting about 23% of the state's total population, it is crucial to implement specific and compelling measures to relocate and rehabilitate tribal families affected by displacement (the Hindu, December 22, 2023).

Observations

The process of Development, marked by numerous large-scale forced evictions of vulnerable populations, has exacerbated the adverse consequences of displacement. This situation has transpired due to the absence of supportive policies aimed at assisting affected individuals in rebuilding their lives. The adverse consequences of displacement, such as inadequate information, the lack of proactive and comprehensive rehabilitation plans, undervaluation of compensation through cash payments, failure to restore lost assets or livelihoods, delayed and traumatic relocations, challenges at relocation sites, instances of multiple displacements, and neglect of the distinctive vulnerabilities of the most disadvantaged groups etc. have been further emphasized by this development trajectory.

It is incumbent upon the operators of the wheel of Development to seek the participation of those displaced or to be displaced. It can be done directly or through their formal and informal leaders, representatives and even the Non-Governmental Organizations. It would help understand the needs and preferences, prevent costly mistakes and reduce the sense of insecurity among the displaced lot. We have already waited too long to challenge the development model that is biased to certain perceptions and classes of society; alternatives for power generation, irrigation, means of production, etc., that do not exert such an enormous toll on human suffering are now available and which might well be followed to reduce forced displacement. To achieve the goals of sustainable Development and for the Development itself to be sustained, it must come from the bottom, which is possible only when the third tier of the governance (functional in its real sense) has determinative rights of participation in policy framing and decision making when it proposes to affect their

interests. Though the structural arrangements in this regard are ensured through the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution and numerous Panchayat Acts in the States, the irony (all too commonplace now) is that the provisions are seldom upheld in practice. A functional grassroots democracy and people's participation in decision-making that benefits and harmonizes all interests is probably the best way to complete the projects on time, keep the costs from escalating, and minimize the miseries of those affected. "Development which cannot provide the necessities of life should be shunned," and attempts should be made for an alternate mode of Development that should provide roads in villages instead of flyovers in cities and schools in all places instead of five-star hotels." Protagonists of Development should understand that multinational companies can't alleviate the plight of the starving millions in the country.

The first objective should be to find alternatives that cause minimal displacement; in those instances, where displacement is inevitable, the full costs of rehabilitation must be internalized into the project cost. The Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act 1996 has made it mandatory for the States having scheduled areas to make specific provisions for providing a wide range of powers to the tribes for their Development. The Act recognizes traditional customary rights over local natural resources. It accepts the validity of customary law and social and religious practices of community resources. Under PESA, the protective aspects have aimed at preserving their unique cultural traits, their rights on land and forests and safeguarding against inhuman exploitation.

It granted villages the authority to safeguard community resources, oversee social sector functionaries, possess minor forest produce, manage water bodies, provide input on mining leases, participate in land acquisition consultations, identify beneficiaries for poverty alleviation and other government programs, and exercise a decisive role in all local development projects. This empowerment aimed to foster community autonomy and inclusivity. However, the development paradigm pursued since independence has exacerbated discontent among marginalized sections of society. This is primarily due to the imposition of the development paradigm by policymakers, which has consistently overlooked the needs and concerns of these communities. Consequently, irreparable damage has been inflicted upon these sections.

The benefits of this development paradigm have disproportionately favored dominant sections of society, placing a heavier burden on those with lower incomes who bear most of the costs. Development, lacking sensitivity to the needs of these communities, has consistently resulted in displacement, and relegated them to a

sub-human existence. As has been emphasized, the life of the tribal people is linked with forests and land, and the tribes desire that they should be accorded complete control over resources. Across the country, the confrontation between the tribal people and the government has been on the issue of land, water, and forest resources, be it in South Bastar of Madhya Pradesh, Adilabad in Andhra Pradesh, Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, and Malkangiri in Odisha.

Policy Implications

1. Governments should reassess and reform land acquisition procedures, particularly in tribal areas, ensuring transparency, genuine consent from local communities, and adherence to environmental regulations.
2. Strengthening gram sabhas' roles in decision-making processes can safeguard the rights and interests of indigenous populations, preventing the misuse of power by corporate entities or authorities.
3. Governments must ensure that decisions regarding significant projects are based on environmental sustainability and community welfare rather than political affiliations or economic interests.
4. Encourage ethical business practices by holding corporations accountable for social and environmental impacts, emphasizing responsible conduct and community engagement.
5. Promote international awareness and recognition of the struggles faced by indigenous communities globally, particularly concerning land rights and environmental preservation.
6. Advocate for policies that protect the rights of indigenous populations, emphasizing the importance of their traditional knowledge and sustainable practices in mitigating climate change and preserving biodiversity.

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