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E-Content

One of the principal issues in modern comparative politics taught in M.A. Political Science is the notion of development. Theories of development and under-development are, inter alia, linked with the notion of political modernization. Development and modernization thus form the core of the modern comparative politics. When viewed from the Third World perspective, problems of development and under-development form significant aspects of the government and politics of the Afro-Asian countries. When discussed in the Indian context, inclusive development appears to have become the buzz word in recent decades. Discourses in tribal development and alienation in India have emerged as central areas of developmental theory ever since the advent of globalization in India. The present article by this author seeks to critically analyze the increasing alienation of tribals in recent decades, particularly with the initiation of the LPG policies in India. This alienation is manifested in the growing violence by their militant outfits, notwithstanding impressive measures initiated by the modern Indian State. The article is supported by wide ranging references, which however, owing to particular reasons, have been omitted. Students are expected to get an insight into the problems of tribal alienation in India in recent decades.

GLOBALISATION AND TRIBAL ALINEATION IN INDIA: Can Exclusionist Practices Lead to Inclusive Development?

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(Abstract)

The present paper comes in the backdrop of the growing Naxal violence in the country spanning over several states and posing a serious threat to the unity and integrity of India. Scholars like Amartya Sen, Jean Dreze and Andre Betaille have highlighted the failure of the State in ensuring the identity, security and livelihood of the tribals. The economic reforms initiated in the post-1990 period in the form of LPG policies and its gaining momentum in the 21st century, notwithstanding the gains accrued, has led to massive uprootment and displacement of the tribal community from their natural habitat. The author feels that unless genuine inclusive policies exhibited by way of tribal participation, recognition of tribal needs and aspirations, development of tribal social capital, tribal-friendly development policies and adequate state response to violation of tribal rights is ensured, integration of tribals in the national mainstream would remain a

distant dream and the goal of building an inclusive democracy would fizzle out no sooner than later. Their exclusion would additionally ensure that violent naxalite elements would continue to wage war against the state in the name of tribal justice. The paper recognizes that socio-economic inequality is at the roots of political inequality and violence.

Keywords: Scheduled Tribes, Alienation, Exclusion, Economic Reforms, Globalisation, Multinational Corporations.

Introduction

India is a large and diverse country having varied race, religions, castes, languages, customs and dialects. Ample diversity exists even in terms of climatic conditions, topography and geographical features. One such diversity is found in the form of vast tribal community spread all over the country that constitutes around 8.6% or 104 million of the total population as per the 2011 census. About a quarter of the world's indigenous population – around 80 million people – are spread across India with the major concentration being in the Middle and North-Eastern parts of India. Of the 86 million tribals, about 80 percent live in the Middle India belt of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Northern Maharashtra and Southern Gujarat. Around 12 percent or about 10 million live in the Northeast. The rest are spread over the remaining States. Going by this Census, Chhattisgarh (31.8%) has the highest percentage of scheduled tribes' people in its population followed by Jharkhand (26.3%) and Orissa (22.1%). At present, there are 698 Scheduled Tribes inhabiting various parts of India with Orissa at 68 having the largest number of Scheduled Tribes.

Tribals are a peace and solitude-loving people with simplicity, honesty and primitivism as their natural way of life. Living in forests and preferring isolation is their natural way of life. Being shy, reserved and avoiding intermixing with people of mainland, they live in close proximity to the nature, follow a distinct language and culture, and lead a simple pattern of life. Women enjoy equal status with men. Unfortunately, they have been subjected to injustice, exploitation and suppression over the years. Notwithstanding numerous government policies and programmes for their welfare, tribals have been the worst victims of the so-called development. The development agenda of the modern globalized State of India has forced the tribals out of their habitat and reduced them to penury. They have been dispossessed and displaced from their habitat and livelihood. Also constitutionally termed as 'Scheduled Tribes', the tribal community today stands as the most marginalized, vulnerable and exploited section of India.

The advent of globalization and the beginning of the tribals' exclusion

The liberal economic reforms adopted by India in 1990 in the form of liberalization, globalization and privatization have all but achieved social justice and inclusive growth. The reforms placed industry, trade and commerce and export promotion activities at the centre of the economic revival of the country. Rich gains accrued through direct and indirect investments in different sectors leading to enhanced employment and income of the people. By the beginning of the 21st century, various sectors of economy started showing positive results as a result of the economic reforms with the service sector emerging “as the fastest growing sector with annual growth rate of above 9% since 2001 and contributing to 57% of GDP in 2012-13”. According to the Economic Survey of India 2013-14, the service sector emerged as the second fastest growing services sector. Going by the positive trends of the economy, India’s economy has been projected to become the “third biggest economy of the world by 2030.” The strength of India’s economy can be gauged by the fact that even after the recent demonetization, in the wake of which there were some downward trends, the economy is projected to grow at 7.2% annually.

Though globalisation-propelled development appeared to be flashy to the urban, educated, techno-savvy middle-class and may have brought in rich gains for the industrial and corporate sectors, it had a disastrous impact in so far as the vulnerable sections in India are concerned. Grim statistical figures reveal the growing divide between the urban and rural areas, and the widening disparity among people notwithstanding the rapid economic growth during the last two decades. The unorganized, unskilled and untrained workers involved in unorganised and informal sectors have been at the receiving end. Women, children, dalits, tribals and minorities who collectively constitute a major chunk of the vulnerable population have largely remained outside the domain of economic gains. If the increased GDP brought about a ‘Shining India’, then it also created a ‘Suffering India’ where the weak and the marginalized people had no place in India’s impressive growth story. Large swathes of population remained outside and untouched of the fruits of economic reforms in India. Though economic growth propelled under globalization policies, social justice and inclusive growth became a chimera for the weak and vulnerable.

In the name of economic development, farmers, workers and tribals have been pushed out of their habitat and livelihood. A consistent pattern of violation of the basic entitlements of vulnerable groups in rural and tribal India has been witnessed ever since the introduction of economic reforms in India, particularly after the year 2000. Development-induced displacements (DIDs) and Project-induced Migration (PIM) have become the order of the day due to the increased mining, irrigation, housing and

industrial projects in the rural and tribal areas. This has resulted in massive uprootment, displacement and migration, especially of poor tribals. The scenario is particularly troublesome in the mineral-rich states of Orissa, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh where the condition of tribals has gone from bad to worse. They have been rendered beggars and are leading pathetic and wretched lives in slums all across the country.

Of the affected areas, the worst has been the Bastar region of South Chattisgarh where maximum Naxal violence and Maoist activities are concentrated. At the time of the creation of Chattisgarh, it was said by the then Chief Minister as "*Rich land, Poor People*" as this state is full of minerals – 19% of India's iron ore, 11% of the coal, bauxite, limestone, all kinds of priceless minerals. The creation of the new state was expected to end the long regime of poverty, backwardness and exploitation and give a new voice to the suppressed and the downtrodden people, of which tribals constituted a great majority. But most unfortunately, during the last 13 years of its creation, the people have become poorer and exploitation increased. Several cases can be cited where governments in connivance with industrial houses and private contractors have brought the tribal community to the present state of misery.

The real impact of globalization, however, started unfolding in the 21st century when Multi-National Corporations began eyeing India's vast mineral wealth embedded in the central Indian States of Orissa, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. These states are heavily forested and tribal dominated where "approximately 24 types of minerals, including iron, bauxite, copper, chromite, gold, lead, manganese, zinc and coal." Mineral wealth thus became the most lucrative mining sectors where foreign corporations started investing in large numbers. During the last one decade, the focus of economic development has virtually shifted to the mining sector. Of the affected areas, the worst has been the Bastar region of South Chattisgarh where maximum Naxal violence and Maoist activities are concentrated. At the time of the creation of the State of Chattisgarh in the year 2000, it was expected that the new state would productively use its vast mineral wealth to end the long spell of poverty, backwardness and exploitation and give a new voice to the suppressed and the downtrodden people, of which tribals constituted a great majority. But most unfortunately, during the last 13 years of its creation, the people have become poorer and exploitation increased. Infact, the government, corporate groups and private contractors have all worked in tandem to rob the state of its wealth and impoverish its people.

Though the Constitution of India provides for a balanced and inclusive development of all sections of India, including tribals, efforts at their integration has largely been just the

opposite of it. A look at the factors responsible for tribal alienation reflects the following state of affairs:

Inclusive laws, exclusionist practices!

Circumvention of Tribal Laws- The PESA Act, 1996

One of the landmark enactments for the tribal welfare was the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996 that aimed at protecting the tribes from being deprived of their lands without their consent. The Act provides a mechanism for tribal self-governance, protection and conservation of the customs, traditions, practices and identity of the tribals, as well as, for grievance redressal, all through the institution of Gram Sabha, which is an all-powerful and a democratic body under the Act. Clause 4.e.(1) of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, provides that —every Gram Sabha shall approve the plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development before such plans, programmes and projects are taken up for implementation|. Again, clause 4. (i) says that —the “Gram Sabha or the Panchayat at the appropriate level shall be consulted before making the acquisition of land in the Scheduled Areas for development projects. And before resettling or rehabilitating persons affected by such projects in the Scheduled Areas, the actual planning and implementation of the projects in the Scheduled Areas shall be coordinated at the State level.” PESA mandates that within a year of its promulgation, the rules for the panchayats in the Fifth Schedule areas have to be legislated keeping in mind the regional contexts. But except for Madhya Pradesh, no other State has done this.

While PESA empowers the State governments to frame rules, the bulk of violations of the Act have come from the state itself. Critics point out three important gaps which have been exploited by governments to bypass the Act: first, PESA is a loosely drafted Act; second, there is no overarching clause that protects it from being bypassed by the State governments; and third, the word ‘consultation’ with the tribal people, as mentioned in the Act, is not clearly defined.”

Of the three, the worst distortion has been done with the word ‘consultation’ used in clause 4 (i) which implies both consultation and consent of the tribal communities before acquisition of any forest land. While the framers of the Act never wished to confine the domains of the Act to mere consultation or discussion, unfortunately the word has been downgraded to simply informing the tribals about the proposed acquisition of land, far to talk of consultation or consent. This has happened in almost all tribal-dominated states, be it Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa. Gram Sabhas in these states have been sidelined to seize land for setting up mining and extraction projects by MNCs, with tacit approval of the state governments.

A leading case in point is an iron-ore project of the Jindal Power and Steel Plant (JSW) project which was given on a lease for 20 years in May 2013 in the Gadchiroli tribal district of Maharashtra. When the tribals came to know about the setting-up of this project in their forest, they vehemently protested against it demanding its roll back on grounds that the project would destroy the environment and their livelihood. It would also lead to widespread displacement, with no relief or rehabilitation notwithstanding the assurances of the state. The tribals also claimed that they were not consulted or even informed about the lease of the land to the JSW and thus, it was the violation of the Act. Disregarding the objections of the tribals, the district administration went ahead and held a meeting in Allapalli town, several kilometers away from Gadchiroli for “security reasons”, and that too in the absence of the tribals of the 17 villages affected by the project. The administration deployed police to ward off any protest from the tribals. The administration claimed that the tribals were informed about the shift in the venue of the public meeting well in advance through local newspapers. The JSW spokesman when confronted with the charges of concocted public hearing, he threw the ball in the government’s court saying holding a public hearing under the PESA Act is the task of the government, not that of the company. Instead, he claimed that “his company is very strict about its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and they will do everything that can be done to help all these villages”.

Contrarily, the villagers claimed that they were neither informed about the public hearing of the project and nor was the information published in any local newspaper that comes in their area. Whatever information was published, that appeared only in far off districts and that too in an English and Marathi newspapers only, which they are ignorant of, any way. Thus, the so-called public meeting and consultation, they claimed, were all rigged and malafide. The project further does not inform about the rehabilitation, compensation or the absorption of the displaced tribals in the project, when it is commissioned. Thus, the entire project, according to tribals is clandestinely shrouded in mystery and deliberate suppression of the details of the project from the tribals (*ibid*).

Activists have consistently pointed out how PESA’s provisions have been willfully violated to serve the interests of the MNCs flocking to their areas. For instance, Gram Sabhas, whose consent is mandatory for the upgradation of rural panchayats into urban panchayats have been consistently sidelined by the state, and some 600 rural panchayats have been converted into urban panchayats, with an intention to encroach on the forest lands by the state and private corporations. The result has been disastrous for the forest land, tribals and the environment. Thus, the state’s power of upgradation has mostly been used as an instrument to bypass PESA. Currently, in most of the upgraded villages, there is a rampant industrial drive. Except Madhya Pradesh, most of

the states, in violation of Section 4(n) of PESA, have enacted laws that provide overwhelming powers to the Gram Panchayat instead of the Gram Sabha. Panchayats, being an elected body, have members of political parties, directly or otherwise, who widely use money and muscle power to get the decisions done they want suiting their nefarious designs (*ibid*).

Dilution of the Forest Rights Act, 2006

Like the PESA, the Forest Rights Act, 2006 too has systematically been violated. FRA was enacted with the objective of protecting the rights of the tribals in live in forests who have been inhabiting the area for decades and to grant them control over forest resources for their livelihood as well to promote conservation of forests through the tribals. The Act specifically laid down that no diversion of forest land can be done without the consent of the tribals of the area concerned. Approval from the inhabiting tribes was thus made compulsory before acquisition of any forest land for non-forestry purposes. It says: "no member of a forest dwelling Scheduled Tribe or other traditional forest dweller shall be evicted or removed from forest land under his occupation till the recognition and verification procedure is completed."

However, these rights-enabling provisions were undone when in 2012 the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) took away, through a ruling, the right of the tribal groups the power to reject major infrastructure projects that endanger their land and livelihoods. The ruling stated that "linear" projects – meaning those involving the construction of roads and canals, and the laying of pipelines, optical fibres and transmission lines — will all be exempt from the need to acquire consent of village communities affected by the clearance, diversion and pollution of their forest land."

The ruling has also undone the guidelines contained within the FRA which says that "*no member of a forest dwelling Scheduled Tribe or other traditional forest dweller shall be evicted or removed from forest land under his occupation till the recognition and verification procedure is completed.*" Activists have vehemently protested against the scrapping of this clause calling it a 'land grab' and violation of the rights of traditional forest dwellers in the name of development, economy and national good".

Workers like Ashish Kothari from Kalpavriksh, one of India's oldest development and conservation NGOs assert that the ruling, in a way, has given a license to the government and its private partners to divert forest lands and displace tribal communities at will. They opine that the linear projects which have now been exempted from the consultation process of the tribal groups in the name of economic development, would destroy the forest environment and lead to a host of negative consequences. They assert that "roads, railway lines and transmission lines through forests cause fragmentation and risk killing animals (dozens of elephants have been

killed attempting to cross railways),.they also divide villages or clusters of villages, with serious impacts on social and economic relations. Linear projects through waterways can impact breeding of species by blocking their movements.”

The decision has sent discontentment and anger among tribal rights workers, advocates, and NGOs who have protested against this government directive. A coalition of international rights organisations including Oxfam and Rights and Resources have petitioned the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) seeking to revert the decision (ibid). In response, the Minister of Tribal Affairs Kishore Chandra Deo informed that the government would not allow the transgression of the PESA and would ensure that Gram Sabhas are consulted before any acquisition of forest land is done. However, with regard to the exemption given to linear projects, it was said that exemption will be given only in public interest and that too under compelling circumstances. However, the tribal communities have lost an important safeguard given to them under the FRA with no signs of any relief till now.

Clandestine activities of MNCs and the displacement of tribals

In the wake of economic reforms that were heralded at the dawn of the 1990s, several MNCs, such as POSCO, Vedanta, Jindal’s JSW etc. flocked to the mineral-rich states of Chattishgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa for mining and extraction of precious minerals. They set-up their plants in the forest areas of these states which were rich in bio-diversity and were dominated by tribal communities living there for centuries. The successive governments at the Centre during the ‘90s and thereafter strived to maintain balance between the interests of the tribals and the commercial needs of the State. The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA); The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 were the two principal legislation enacted by the government to protect the tribal communities

Disregarding these provisions and acting in connivance with political and bureaucratic patronage, the private corporate groups have resorted to widespread illegal and deceitful activities in occupying the forest lands and getting the forest dwellers evacuated from their homeland through force and fraud. No compensation and resettlement policies of the government were followed by the MNCs in displacing the tribal communities.

This has been a common practice with all MNCs who are operating in Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa nad Maharashtra. For instance, in Orissa, the London-based Vedanta group was granted a permit by the State and Central governments for mining bauxite in the Niyamgiri hills in 2003. The hills, with rich forest cover, bio-diversity and wildlife, are inhabited by the Dongria-Kondh tribe who revere the forest as their deity.

Huge protests followed with Vedanta's mining operations as it started polluting the land, water and environment. The matter reached the Supreme Court in 2005 which constituted a committee of experts, which in turn recommended the scrapping of the project as it did not fulfill the environmental norms and tribal consent. The Supreme Court overlooked the recommendations and allowed the project to continue. Protest grew louder over the years and ultimately the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), acting on the report of its expert committee, stopped the project in 2010. Its permit was finally cancelled in 2011.

Dubious role of the State

The deterioration in the condition of tribal communities owes no less to the unhealthy nexus between state and the private corporations. Both these agencies have connived to rob the tribals of the protections provided in the PESA and FRA which clearly lay down the mandatory requirement of obtaining consent of the tribal people before acquisition of any land by the state for the mining purpose. Thus, when, the mining company applies for the lease, the application asks whether company has surface rights? If not, has the consent of the owner/occupier been obtained?" If the reply is 'no', then as per law, the application should be sent back to the mining company. The company writes back saying, 'Consent is being arranged. Lease may be given subject to submission of consent before entry'. The lower-rung revenue official of the state- the Tehsildar- adopts a soft approach mixed with vested interests, and posts notice for the villagers asking them to come and take their compensation on a particular date. The innocent villagers, unaware of the abuse of laws, and knowing little about the consequences of coming and taking compensation, end up losing their title on the land. Once taken, the deal goes in favour of the mining company with state officials duly too getting handsomely compensated by the company. Once their land is taken away, the tribals get uprooted and become a wanderer. This is the modus operandi, besides several other tactics, adopted by the state and company acting in tandem with each other to corner the forest lands for the so-called development of tribal area. Ignoring the constitutional demands of holding consultation with the Gram Sabhas or the Panchayats, local officials are co-opted or circumvented via provisions for special powers in case of emergency.

Defective land acquisition, compensation and rehabilitation policies

Land acquisition, compensation and rehabilitation of the displaced tribals have been a major source of dissatisfaction, resentment and exclusion of tribals. Prior to the enactment of the Land Acquisition Act 2013, there was no provision of compensation or rehabilitation of the displaced people on account of the developmental projects

undertaken by the State. The Land Acquisition Act, 1894 framed by the British Government was kept into force even after the independence. From 1947 until 1991, the people whose lands were taken away, or people who worked on the land by the state in the name of development were never compensated, resettled or rehabilitated by the government. Almost all mega projects- dams, power houses, railways, ports, housing societies etc. were built on the acquired lands of the farmers without any compensation. This was a huge cause of resentment among the displaced people, particularly in the rural and forest areas.

Taking lessons from past legislative defects, the *The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013* (popularly called as the Land Acquisition Act, 2013) was passed addressing critical issues, among others, of compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement to the affected persons. Thus, while repealing the British-era Land Acquisition Act, 1894, the present enactment been hailed for paving way for the development and industrialization of India. The Act was amended in March 2015 to address certain procedural difficulties that were encountered in the way of its implementation. Among its other features, provision for compensation, relief and rehabilitation has been extended to thirteen Acts mentioned in the Fourth Schedule of the Land Acquisition Act 2013. The condition concerning 'Social Impact Assessment' and "Special Provisions for Safeguarding Food Security" has also been done away with for projects in five specific areas (Rao). However, dissatisfaction still prevails against the Act. In nutshell, the vexed problems of land acquisition, compensation and rehabilitation still remains unresolved despite its apparent settlement now.

Unrestrained State violence and repression of the tribals

Tribals have largely been given raw and rough treatment by the State and its security forces. Forceful eviction of tribals by security forces and henchmen of powerful private corporations have led to massive protests by tribals. The protesting tribals have willfully been picked, tortured and even killed in dozens. Activists have pointed out that in the name of fighting naxals, unarmed tribals are routinely picked up, interrogated and tortured to 'elicit' information about the naxals' location. Fake charges are framed against them and are thrown behind bars without any hope of getting justice from the state. Their non-violent protest and agitations have, however, been termed as a law and order problem and thus force and violence has been used against them by the state. Besides, the role of the Salwa Judum- the state counter-insurgency vigilante group- which became notorious for extra-judicial killings and kidnappings on a large scale in Chattisgarh- has also given rise to increase armed resistance from tribal communities. Numerous reports documenting the clandestine operations and activities of Salwa Juddum alongwith paramilitary forces in

the name of Naxal operations have been published in leading newspapers and journals. Kidnappings, torture, custodial killings of tribal youths and rapes of tribal women became common practices of Salwa Juddum.

Unarmed and peaceful movements of tribal people in Chattisgarh were sought to be crushed through this organization in connivance with security forces. Their excesses and illegal organizations thus forced the Supreme Court to declare it as an “illegal and unconstitutional” organization and ordered the State of Chattisgarh to disband this organization and seize its weapons and ammunitions. In addition, the local goons, employed by private corporations, who have also close connections with local politicians, indulge in extortion, threatening and evicting the helpless tribals from their habitations with no redressal from the state. Thus, the State, the politicians and private corporations have all indulged in using violence and repression against the peaceful agitating tribals. The illiteracy, poverty and backwardness of the tribals have additionally put them in an unending vicious circle of violence and repression.

Undoing Exclusion: Measures for Inclusive Development of Tribals

The problem of exclusion and marginalization of the tribal community is a complicated and gigantic one. As pointed out above, a number of factors have contributed to the worsening of status of this community. Overtime, several measures have been suggested both by government agencies and scholars. Some of the measures recommended for their upliftment and welfare are as follows:

Both the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes are extremely weak and unable to protect the tribal rights. Infact, the former apparently only serves to collect incomplete statistics of tribal eviction and preparing reports for bureaucratic consumption rather than protecting their interests. The later has reduced itself to the status of another useless department of the former (as will be discussed later), despite being a constitutional powerful body that could undertake investigation against atrocities on the tribals, if set-up properly. The toothless-ness of these bodies is exemplified in the following comments.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in a report submitted to the Lok Sabha on 23 October 2008 observed, “Notwithstanding Act and regulations to control alienation of tribal land, tribal people are being alienated from their land in the name of development and due to insufficient amount given to them for their land, they migrate to other places in search of livelihood.”

It further stated that “tribals should not suffer in the name of development” and recommended that “the Ministry of Tribal Affairs should take immediate su-moto action

whenever it is reported that tribal people are agitating against displacement and endangerment to their lives.”

It is now well known that globalization policies adopted in India have harmed the tribals' interest in a big way. Development projects, such as dams, housing schemes, special economic zones, mining projects and the like have resulted in massive displacement and uprootment of the tribal population since the inauguration of neo-liberal economic policies in India. In the era of globalization-propelled economic reforms which is largely to the benefit of the urban, educated elites, the disadvantaged people are at the receiving end as experience has shown that development projects have come up at the cost of their land, livelihood and resources. While development is the buzz word of current economic reforms, the lack of tribals' concerns in the State's decision making apparatus coupled with blatant violation of their rights by the corporates have made economic reforms a nightmare experience for them. Hence, it is imperative to safeguard their vital interests that comprise their language, culture, habitat and livelihood. For this, a futuristic and perspective planning, that gives voice to the vulnerable sections in policy making, that hears their grievances and incorporates their sensitivities, be brought into place.

Several experts from academia and government have consistently held that the Maoist problem needs to be handled with more sensitivity and better understanding. A tit-for-tit response or an iron-fisted policy against the tribal leaders who are often branded as Naxals cannot be successful in the long run. Even former police chiefs such as K. Vijay Kumar, who is credited with having eliminated the dreaded sandalwood smuggler of Veerappan of Tamilnadu; and has also led massive combing operations against the Maoists in Chattisgarh, have called for displaying a better understanding towards the problems being faced by the tribals. Without lowering their guard, the State, in his opinion, needs to understand that the years of deprivation and injustice meted to tribal and poor people of rural India, have made them restless and diverted them to take up arms against the State. He called for initiating dialogues and communication with them with the aim of making them understand the vitals of development and rule of law.

Attitudinal change in the outlook and conduct of State and its agencies is the need of the hour. Tribals should not be treated as a burden on the State, nor be looked upon as criminals, just because they are unimpressive, appearance wise. Their claim to the forest as their natural habitat and forest resources as their means of livelihood has to be recognized by the State in right earnest for they are the original inhabitants of the forests. Land acquisition should be resorted to only when it becomes mandatory, and not as a matter of choice. Proper compensation and rehabilitation should be a natural corollary in all cases of acquisition. The displaced tribals should mandatorily be rehabilitated by private or state corporations, whosoever is acquiring the land for its venture. Leaders of tribal communities, representing genuine tribal issues, have to be

given a patient hearing; and their leaders be called to negotiating tables by the government. The Security forces and courts of law have to treat them humanely and patiently, just they wish to be given a patient and a responsive hearing when their issues are hanging fire. The menace of Naxalism has first to be dealt with socially, economically and politically, failing before coercive action is resorted against them.

To overcome the multifarious challenges confronting the vast tribal population today, a humane approach is required which takes into account both the development and the humanitarian needs of the tribal community. The central concern of the tribal community dealing with their language, culture and identity has to be addressed while devising strategies for their inclusion in the economic growth of the country. It is to be noted that the Land Acquisition Act of 2013 and the amendments incorporated in 2015 go a long way in addressing the concerns of the tribal populace. However, the lackluster implementations of these legislative measures and constitutional safeguards have created an unwanted room for the vested interests for backdoor maneuverings and circumvention of developmental policies. This has to be taken care of urgently if inclusive and equitable growth has to become a reality for the weak and vulnerable sections of India, including the tribals. There is a need to make tribal communities stakeholders in the development and reducing the gulf between the rich and poor.

Along with plugging the loopholes and gaps in the existing legislative and executive machinery dealing with the tribal community, renewed emphasis needs to be given to innovation and employment generation suiting the tribal community. Activities such as fish farming, poultry farming, sericulture etc. through Medium and Small Scale Enterprises (MSMEs) needs to be actively promoted by the State as well as through private initiatives. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship should impart skill training to the tribal youth on a massive scale.

Tribal activists have complained that the government has created a frightening myth of 'Red Corridor' in India, implying the existence of parallel government of Maoists and Naxals which is pitted against the Indian State. Thus, in the name of fighting Maoists, tribals have been targeted and killed in large numbers by security forces. However, social activists and certain political parties have challenged the government's action stating that killing Naxals by using armed forces would not end Naxalism till poverty and violation of fundamental rights of tribals continue. Instead, Naxalism would continue getting support from the poor peasantry who look upon them as their savior. Besides, it has been emphasized that autonomy in administration to Naxal affected area can only ensure development and this will help curb Naxalism.

Conclusion

Going by the above, it is clear that tribals have remained outside the growth process in India's post-reform period. Infact, their rights have been violated, ignored, circumvented or diluted by governments both at the Centre and States as a result of unbridled globalization during the last two decades. In the process, the worst sufferers have been the tribal communities, environment, forests and forest resources. All this has rendered tribals marginalized and vulnerable. The result has been the unfortunate growth and spread of Naxalism and internal security problem on a massive scale.

Thus, urgently required is the inclusion and mainstreaming of tribals in the growth process. Apart from the measures suggested above, it is to be noted that no developmental work could be productive for the vulnerable sections, including tribals, so long as the culture of impunity and exclusion reflected in the lack of tribal voices in State policies, the gap between the felt needs and real needs of the tribes, the willful circumvention of tribal laws to meet the interests of the global corporations, the absence of culture-specific and need-based policies, the growing nexus between the state and corporate world prevails. Economic growth coupled with equity and justice alone can usher in inclusive democracy and a humane society.

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