

Chapter V

Environment and Tribals: Social and Political Resistance against POSCO and Tipaimukh

The academic discourses on social resistance by the tribals highlight the socio-economic lifestyle of the tribals and other subalterns. It is asserted that the history of Indian environmental movement as the study of the struggle for rights over land, water and forests and tribals and other marginalized communities are the main plaintiffs of such rights. From the ancient past, the tribals and other marginalized communities are the sole bearers and porters of 'hunting-gathering' cultures.¹ Scheduled tribes and other marginalized communities have been unable to diminish their dependence on natural resources for survival and existence, although several constitutional provisions aimed at promoting the affirmative action for the tribals. On the one hand, the implementation process of the laws on tribal development is not smooth enough and on the other, to accelerate the modern developmental process, state authorities are encroaching on the economic and cultural life of the tribals. As Ghanshyam Shah (2004), Amita Baviskar (1995), Vandana Shiva (1988), Ramachandra Guha (2006) observed, the social and political mobilization among the tribals take definite shapes such as agrarian unrest, forest rights movement, anti-displacement movement, survival related movement and movement for proper rehabilitation and resettlement. All these movements, in one way or another, are linked to the protection of natural environment and social ecology. In these movements, the tribals and other marginalized communities are identified as the victimized groups. However, the emergence of the politics of middle class activists on that platform is a coherent socio-political identity that emanates from the outside

¹ Adhikari, Ashim Kumar, 1984, 'Hunter and Gatherers in India: A Preliminary Appraisal of their Structure and Transformation' in *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 8-16.

of ‘hunting-gathering’ society but develops a popular culture that endeavours to protect the tribal way of life against state authoritarianism.

Indigenous People and their Relations with Nature: Economic, Religious and Cultural Lifestyle

On the basis of the population size, geographic spread, mode of livelihood and social organization, Indian literatures on tribal people termed them variously. The term “Hill and Forest Tribes” came in use after the first ethnographic surveys. The term “Aboriginal Tribes” was also used but the presumption behind its use did not go unquestioned. The term “Scheduled Tribes” was introduced by the Government of India in the law and constitution even before the independence of the country. However, the term “Indigenous” is very significant and popularly used to denote a particular history of settlement and usurpation of a section of people of a society. Notwithstanding, the settlement and usurpation throughout human history, they have not left similar marks on the population as a whole everywhere. Region wise pattern of settlement and usurpation provide environment to build up a particular identity, adjustment or change within it.² Article 1 (1b) of the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) convention concerning ‘Indigenous and Tribal People’ of convention no. 169 of 1989 defined the ‘indigenous’ by the following statement:

‘People in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic and cultural and political institutions’.³

The term ‘indigenous’ was used for the first time by the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (ILO Convention No. 107). The convention framed certain general international standards for facilitating government actions to

² Bêteille, André, 1998, “The Idea of Indigenous People” in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 39, No. 2, p. 188.

³ *ILO Convention No. 169*, 1989, Article 1.1.

protect and promote progressive integration of the concerned people into the respective national communities. India was tied to covenant Convention No. 107 without any objection because the term only highlighted the need of integrating the indigenous and or tribal people into the larger social and political system. The Convention no. 169 has filled up this gap. In Indian context, the internationalization of the rights and privileges associated with the term 'indigenous' has come to be critically examined and even challenged. It is to be noted that, the social workers, missionaries and political activists, who belong to India or worked on Indian tribes, have used the term *adivasi* to connote the tribes or indigenous people in Indian language.⁴

Close interconnection and interdependence between man and nature can be easily felt in the poor and marginalized tribal societies. Such interconnection and interdependence is basically economic, religious and cultural. Depending upon forest or natural resources, people of a group of marginalized people or traditional communities often practice or carry on the same economic activities or profession or means of survival and subsistence, which ultimately helps to generate social integrity within the community. In India, from the ancient past, most of the marginalized traditional communities are dependent upon agrarian economy; some of them practice *jhum* or shifting cultivation, settled cultivation etc. Hunting-gathering activities were also a tradition in the tribal world. In ancient India, agrarian economy as well as hunting-gathering economy was the sources of income for the traditional communities. But the colonial exploitation and non-tribal dissimulation evicted the tribals from their ancestral dwelling places, made them marginalized and forced them to rely intrinsically upon hunting-gathering economy. After the colonial invasion and inhumane plunder by the non-tribals, tribals and marginalized communities have become the agricultural labourers under the non-tribals. Colonial rulers evicted the tribals from the richest natural resource areas blaming them ecologically profligate people. The process of tribal eviction continued to exist even in the post colonial period in the name of modern economic development. Thus

⁴ Xaxa, Virginius, 1999, "Tribes as Indigenous People of India" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 51, pp. 3590-3591.

tribals are tolerating age old injustice and oppression; even tribals have been deprived by the legal-rational authorities in the name of reducing the agony of tribals.

According to the Tamil heroic poems of *Sangam* literature, the tribals or the descent groups like *Kuravar*, *Vettuvar* and *Vetar* were subsisting on hunting/gathering and shifting cultivation; *Itaiyar* people were subsisting on agro-pastoralism; *Maravar* lived on predatory means and *Paratavar* subsisted on fishing and salt manufacturing. In ancient Southern India, as Tamil heroic poem explains, there were several groups of functionaries like *Ulavar* (wet-rice agriculturalists), *Toluvvar* (cultivators of dry land called *Punam* and *Enal*), *Taccar* (carpenters), *Kollar* (smiths), *Vanikar* (traders) etc. who were coexisting and interactions were going on among the various tribes following the means of subsisting determined by the landscape of ecosystems that they inhabited. Thus social formation was entrenched upon hunting/gathering/fishing, agro-pastoralism, wet-rice agriculture, salt manufacturing, crafts production and exchange as the consistent economies. Multiple use of iron was the main source of technological application behind all the economies and productive and distributive relations were based on kinship relation.⁵ It is also evidenced that, since the ancient times the traditional communities and other marginalized people are habituated to reside in the remote areas, open space and mostly in the areas of richest natural resources, even few traditional indigenous people time wise change their dwelling places for the better access of natural resources. *Arbukahas* of mount Abu, *Haimvatahs* of the Himalayas, *Vindyapmulakahs* of the *Vindyas* are few mountain dwellers. *Kausijakahs* of Kosi, *Saindhavas* and *Sindu-Sauvirahas* of Sindhu, *Bhadras* of the Ganga are the people live on the river banks. *Pasupah* and *Govindahs* are the pastoral people and *Marudha/Maradhas* are known as desert dwellers. *Adirashtra*, *Vanarasyah*, *Nishad*, *Mundah*, *Savarah*, *Kokuratah* (Korku), *Karusha* (Kurukh), *Kollagir* (Koli), Bhil are

⁵ Gurukul, Rajan, 2008, "Tribes, Forest and Social Formation in Early South India" in Archana Prasad edited *Environment, Development and Society in Contemporary India: An Introduction*, Macmillan India Ltd., New Delhi, p. 22.

identified as forest people and apart from these communities, a number of forest dwellers are mentioned as *jangalaha*, *dandakah* etc.⁶

Different tribes and castes groups have many sub-tribes or sub-castes with a number of exogamous totem clans.⁷ In many context, sub-tribe or sub-castes status has been ascertained depending upon different species of plants and animals. This is called totemism which, as an academic discipline, systematically analyses the relationship between groups such as clans and various species of plants and animals. Among the Oraons, the Toppo clan takes its name from a bird, the Minj clan from a particular species of fish and the Lakra clan from the tiger. Such totemic structure also can be found among the Mundas, Kharias and Hos. Tribal people consider certain limits or prohibition on moral or religious grounds with respect to the objects of their totems. Tribals do not eat, hark, kill, destroy or even domesticate the plants or animals which ascertain their totemic status. The tribals do not use anything made or obtained from their totems. They have their reverence towards their totems. The particular species of plants or animal that the tribes take as totems are not from any one single family of animals, birds, reptiles or plants rather where totemic exists; natural objects from all of these families take part in constructing the social structure. Thus the tribes make a balance between social and natural order.⁸ Totemic vision and values also helps to determine the strategies for community based conservation of natural resources. Although hunting, one of the means of survival for the tribes, is a natural instinct, apart from the totemic values, tribal people control such necessity in respect of nature's cycles of production and reproduction; even most tribal societies apologies to kill the animals to which they have to hunt.⁹ Many of India's hunters-gatherers (tribal groups) have their respect for conservation of natural resources and hence, they believe that certain animals many not be hunted between July and October and they impose restrictions on the cutting of particular species of tree such

⁶ Singh, K. S., 2000, 2001, "Ecology, Identity and Culture" in *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 27/28, Vol. 27, No. 4/ Vol. 28, No. 1: The Human Landscape, p. 207.

⁷ Ferreira, John Vincent, 1965, *Totemism in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p. 2.

⁸ Xaxa, Virginus, 2008, *State, Society and Tribes: Issues in Post-colonial India*, Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, p. 106.

⁹ Shiva, Vandana, 1988, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*, Zed Books, New Delhi, p. 48.

as Sal (*Shorea robusta*). In tribal societies Sal is regarded as sacred and clusters of Sal trees on the outskirts of villages are known as ‘sacred groves’.¹⁰ Thus the tribals play an ecological role in context to biodiversity conservation. Hunting-gathering economy and agrarian economy of the tribals revolve around the forest areas and the forest resources. For example – Bonda of Odisha; Birhor of Bihar; Cholanikan of Kerala; Chenchu of Andhra Pradesh; Onge, Jarwa and Sentinelese of Andaman and Nicobar Islands are solely dependent upon forests and forests products for hunting, fishing, collection of roots tubers, fruits etc. Gatherers use several indigenous tools like digging sticks, iron knives, pots and vessels made of mud, wood, bamboo etc. Hunters use rope nets and traps, bows and arrows with wooden or iron heads, knives, sticks etc. On the contrary, tribes of Northeast India, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Sikkim, Gujarat and Bihar practice shifting cultivation in the hilly and forested areas of their habitat.¹¹ For housing, tribals use nature elements and forest products. Hence, they have mud walls and tiled or thatched roofs even considerable use of bamboo and timber as poles and frames can be seen in the agriculturalists tribal societies. Materials obtaining from the forest, they produce agricultural implements like plough and yokes, devices for lifting water for irrigation and threshing and winnowing tools. From the forest resources, they make handled and ribbed umbrellas with bamboo covered with leaves, wooded waterproof coats, wooden stools, baskets, cups, plates, cushions, ropes, mortar and pestles, oil presses etc. Even the art objects, artifacts, musical instruments and ornaments, which they use, are made from forest products. Therefore, the whole material culture of the tribes is rooted in the tribal people’s dependence on forests and forest produce.¹²

Vandana Shiva explored tribal-nature relationship from the ecological and economic point of view. Ecologically indigenous and naturalized vegetation provides essential life support by stabilizing the soil and water systems. Economically trees

¹⁰ Gosling, David L., 2001, *Religion and Ecology in India and Southeast Asia*, Routledge, New York, pp. 17-18.

¹¹ Debashish, Debnath, 1998, “Tribal-Forest Relationship” in Vidyut Joshi edited *Tribal Situation in India*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, pp. 108-109.

¹² Xaxa, Viginus, 2008, *ibid*, p. 103.

have been regarded as the sources of small timber, fodder, fuel, fiber, medicines, oils, dyes etc. Indigenous medicines are produced from more than 2,000 species of wild and cultivated plants.¹³ For the remedies of pain like headache, toothache, stomachache, eye pain, ear pain, migraine and the treatment of the diseases like high and ordinary fever, malaria, wounds, constipation, diarrhea, dysentery, epilepsy, rheumatism, insomnia, tetanus and eczema etc. the Oraons use leaves, roots and barks of plants and trees. Many of these plants and trees grow wild in the jungle and some of these are cultivated in the field by the tribals.¹⁴ Forest areas of Mawphalang village of East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya are known as ‘sacred forest’ for the Khasi tribe. *Taxus baccata*, a rare species of tree, was found in that area. The plant is very sacred to the Khasis and they find worth medicinal value on it. In the medical science, the plant is used for anti-cancer reactions.¹⁵ Khasis use 57 common abundant and rare medicinal plants for the treatment of ordinary and incurable diseases. Khasis use *Taxus baccata* (Dieng seh Blei is the local name of the plant) for the treatment of tumors.¹⁶ Thus, indigenous knowledge system for the treatment of diseases has been developed by the tribal communities centering round the forest resources.

In the tribal societies, forests have an intrinsic value on their religious beliefs and sentiments. Many myths of tribal culture placed forests at a very highly dignified position. Undoubtedly, usefulness role of the forests is the motivating factor behind such sacredness belief and their urge for the protection or conservation of forests and even of other natural objects. Didayis (a tribal community) of Odisha believe that when the world was destroyed by a flood, the supreme deity made a new world without trees. As a result, people faced difficulties to cook and build houses. But

¹³ Shiva, Vandana, 1991, *Ecology and the Politics of Survival: Conflicts over Natural Resources in India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, p. 75.

¹⁴ Xaxa, Virginus, 2008, *ibid*, p. 103.

¹⁵ Sondhi, Sanjay, 2011, “Conservation in the South Garo Hills” in *Environment Chronicles: The Best of Terra Green*, The Energy and Resource Institute, Teri Press, New Delhi, p. 60.

¹⁶ Kayang, H., B. Kharbuli, B. Myrboh and D. Syiem, 2005, “Medicinal Plants of Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, India” in J. Bernath, E. Nemeth, International Council for Medicinal and Aromatic Plants and International Society for Horticultural Science *A Proceedings of WOCMAP III: The IIIrd Congress on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants – Volume 1: Bioprospecting and Ethnopharmacology*, Chiang Mai, Thailand, February 3-7, 2003, p. 80.

when God saw their sufferings he added trees.¹⁷ Verrier Elwin, an anthropologist and tribal activist, observed that the Gond's (tribe of Central India) idea of heaven is 'miles and miles of forest without any forest-guards' and the idea of hell is 'miles and miles of forest without any *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*)' tree. Similarly, Baigas and Murias of Central India, think themselves as children of 'Dharti Mata' or Mother Earth who loves them and takes care too. They believe that the forest is a setting for romance and considered the forest as the ideal trysting place for lovers.¹⁸ In tribal culture, forest is seen as earth's fertility and productivity is systematized in yet another as the form of Mother Earth. In Bengal, *Sheora* (*Tropbis aspera*), *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*) and *Asvathha* (*Ficus religiosa*) are regarded as the *Vana Durga* or the tree Goddess; in Comilla district of Bangladesh she is known as *Bamani* and in Assam she is *Rupeshwari*. Tribals worship the trees and forests conceiving them as *Vana Devatas* or forest deities. Tribals have their reverence towards nature not because of fear and ignorance rather because of the ecological insight which the tribal societies have developed in time and space. In context to Central India, tribals discovered the utilities of *Mahua* tree over their survival economy. The tree is most valuable for the tribals of Chhattisgarh, Santhal Parganas, Bastar and Satpuras. Tribal women collect the fleshy corollas of its flowers which can be eaten raw or cooked, or dried, ground and mixed with flour for making cakes, or distilled into spirit. Tribals produce thick white oil from the *Mahua* seeds and the oil can be used for cooking and burning even the oil is used for the manufacturing of margarine soap and glycerin. It was observed that, in 1897 and 1900 when serious famine continued in Central India, profuse blossoming of *Mahua* flowers was insurance for the tribals.¹⁹

A close interconnection between the tribals and nature can be found in the *Karam* and *Sarhul* festivals among the Oraons, Mundas and Santals. In these festivals, nature and natural phenomena occupy a central place. In *Sarhul*, marriage is enacted between sun and the earth in hope that such ritual would ensure the

¹⁷ Gosling, David L., 2001, *ibid*, p. 18.

¹⁸ Guha, Ramachandra, 1996, "Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin and the Tribal Question in Late Colonial India" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, No. 35/37, p. 2376.

¹⁹ Shiva, Vandana, 1988, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

fertility of mother earth. Sacred grove or a cluster of Sal trees acts as a place of worship. On the other hand, like the *Sarhul*, *Karam* festival is celebrated in the month of September after paddy has been transplanted and turned green symbolizing the Karam (*Neolamarckia cadamba*) tree as the Karam deity who has the power to determine whether the autumn harvest will be good or bad. Therefore, nature's fertility and productivity are the prime concern behind the celebration of such festivals.²⁰ Even the nursing of the crops is also important for the tribals. Mundas believe that spirits exist in the nature and their duty is to look after the crops. These spirits are known as *Bongas* which is the generic name referring to spirits and the power and the force of mountains, hills, forests, trees, rivers, houses and villages. *Desawali* is one the spirits which plays a vital role in the Munda festivals which are connected to the cultivation of land. The home of this deity is the *Sarna* or sacred grove which is identified as a little path of forest and was created when all else was cleared for the cultivation and was left as a refuge for the Gods where they might live apart.²¹

Development and Displacement by State Fiat: A Historical Review

In contemporary India, various developmental measures initiated by the state are enormously affecting the economic system of the poor tribes and other marginalized people whose survival economy is deeply entrenched with natural resources of the country. Tribal people's dependence on natural resources for survival and subsistence is a long journeyed tradition. Similarly, the process of tribal eviction from rich natural resource area by the influential persons or the power holders for the so called public good, reformation, conservation and economic development is another fact. Involuntary displacement of the tribals is a historically explored phenomena and the process still continues to exist when the question of development is raised.

²⁰ Xaxa, Virginus, 2008, *ibid*, p. 105.

²¹ Damodaran, Vinita, 2007, "Tribes in Indian History" in Ranjan Chakrabarti edited *Situating Environmental History*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, p. 135.

In the early nineteenth century, the Baigas of Central provinces were dependent on the hunting-gathering economy and *bewar*, i. e. swidden or shifting cultivation, for their survival. The gathering activities made the Baigas a part of the wider local and non-local economy.²² But conflict between the *bewar* practice and the natural regeneration of Sal forests played an important role in the intensification of the internal conflict between segregation and integration in the Baiga society.²³ The creation of Indian Forest Department was another issue behind the tribal resentment against the British government as enacting laws the Forest Department imposed several restrictions on the economic activities of the tribals. In 1864, the government general appointed Dietrich Brandis as the first inspector general who established Indian Forest Department as an organized State Department managed by the Indian exchequer. In 1871, the Department of Revenue and Agriculture oversaw the Forest Department under the supervision of the home department.²⁴ The imperial environmentalism considered tribes as the destroyers of the ecosystem. Hence, to guard the forest resources British officials have recommended for the eviction of indigenous tribes from the forests by planting a band of white settlers as a buffer zone.²⁵ It was reported that that the shifting cultivation is invariably harmful for forest regeneration, destroys the ecological balance and it results in substantial soil erosion which subsequently leads to flooding of rivers and drying of hill springs. In Madhya Pradesh, Indian Forest Act banned *jhum* in all areas including large tracts which were under princely states. But the tribals were continuing the traditional rotations of *jhum*. The Forest Department charged the prosecutions and monetary fines but such remedials have failed to stop the cultivators. Then the Forest Department turned to the police and made several arrests. When the cultivators kept the promise that they would follow the plough cultivation, the police released the arrested persons. Forest authorities were hopeful of persuading the younger generation of Baigas to give up *bewar* practices but the older generation of the

²² Prasad, Archana, 2003, *Against Ecological Romanticism: Verrier Elwin and the Making of Anti-Modern Tribal Identity*, Three Essays Collective, Delhi, p. 48.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁴ Barton, Gregory Allen, 2004, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism*, Cambridge University Press, New York, p. 62.

²⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

community was not ready to surrender because they believed that the Baigas were born to be kings of the jungle and the soil and did not want to give up *bewar*.²⁶

Even in the post-colonial period, the state government followed the British policy to stop the traditional way of land use pattern, basically *jhum*. Some within the scientists, technocrats and politicians believe that the shifting cultivation is a destructive form of agriculture. Therefore, the authority should ban it for the ecological sustainability. In the Garo hill of Northeast, a considerable figure of tribal population practice primitive system of agriculture, i. e. *jhum*. In the post-colonial period, the government took an initiative to switch the *jhum* cultivators to plantation crops, horticultural crops and cash crops. Under this scheme, pilot projects for the control of *jhum* accompanying with river basin schemes were started under North-East Council Plan in 1974-75. At its starting point, dry terrace and wet-rice cultivation were introduced on several areas of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills. But Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) study of 1983 reported that, by 1983, 3,000 families came under this project, but 150 families had given up *jhum* totally. Therefore, governmental schemes, projects and plans met with little success and most of the *jhum* cultivators were continuing this traditional system of agriculture. However, against this backdrop, Soil Conservation and Forest Departments reinstated full-scale inquiry on the motives of the shifting cultivators providing few alternatives on plantations and cultivation of selected crops.²⁷ Scientists, like Prof. P. S. Ramakrishnan, viewed that, *jhum* is not intrinsically irrational on the grounds of environment and production. To him, *jhum* or slash and burn cultivation is a highly sophisticated farming system and can be best suited to the ecosystem of the North-East. For continuous cultivation heavy is essential in the mountain soils. In *jhum* cultivation, cultivators burn the vegetative cover which helps to enrich the nutrient base of the mountain soils. But it is only when the *jhum* cycles become very short that this traditional practice becomes ecologically destructive. In

²⁶ Gadgil, Madhav and Ramachandra Guha, 1992, *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp. 218-220.

²⁷ Malik, Bela, 2008, "Shifting Cultivation in the Garo Hills: North-East India (1860-1970)" in Archana Prasad edited *Environment, Development and Society in Contemporary India: An Introduction*, Macmillan India Ltd., New Delhi, pp. 124-126.

various parts of North-East India, while *jhum* cycles now range from 3-5 years, previously it was 15 to 20 and the productivity also has been dropped. It would be pertinent to note that the Naga farmers (tribes) of Khonoma village in Nagaland have invented a kind of traditional knowledge to stabilize shifting cultivation at lower cycles. The Nagas discovered that the alder (*Alnus nepalensis*), a tree that grows across the Himalaya in landslide areas, is capable of fixing nitrogen and coppices extremely. About a hundred years ago, the Nagas started to plant this tree in a large number in their shifting fields. Pollarding or cutting the branches of the tree the Naga farmers cultivate the land for two years and after two years of production they make the field as fallow land for another two to three years. In that period, they move on to cultivate another field having alder. Thus the Nagas are practicing shifting cultivation following a rotation and without destroying forest cover.²⁸ In Karnataka, the practice of *podu* cultivation (shifting cultivation) by the Soliga tribe helped in wildlife conservation. It was observed that, during their shift to another place, Soligas leave some of the some of the crops and fruits like bananas, tubers, mustard, amaranths, ragi and ragi grass, papaya, guava, tapioca, *sebu*, bottle gourd, cucumbers, pumpkin, climber beans, lemon and jackfruit etc. After their departure the remaining crops and fruits became the forage for the wild animals like wild boar, barking deer, bison etc and birds like parrots, dove etc. Thus *podu* cultivation provides food for the wild animals, birds and for the insects. When crops were being cultivated, the wild animals, birds and insects came and fed on the different crops. On the contrary, during *podu* cultivation, Soligas dig pits or wells for drinking water but after departing agricultural field, all these sources of water become the source of drinking water for the wild animals and birds.²⁹ Therefore, *jhum* practiced by the indigenous communities is not ecologically destructive rather through this traditional system of agriculture the traditional communities play a vital role for ecological conservation. Presently, *jhum* cultivation is threatened due to the state-sponsored developmental projects. In Eastern and North-East India, many tribal communities

²⁸ Agarwal, Anil and Sunita Narain, 1992, "Traditional Systems of Water Harvesting and Agroforestry" in Geeti Sen edited *Indigenous Vision: Peoples of India, Attitudes to the Environment*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, pp. 227-228.

²⁹ Madegowda, C., 2009, "Traditional Knowledge and Conservation" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 21, p. 67.

have been forced to give up *jhum* for the implementation of economic developmental projects.

‘Development-induced-displacement’ has become a challenging issue since the immediate post-independent era. Since 1950’s alienation between tribes and the natural resources is occurring as a process of the implementation and realization of national development planning, integrated multipurpose projects and new economic policy. The wave of development and modernization has put forth an economic movement worldwide but such strategy has failed to minimize the poor people’s dependence on natural resources. Still the tribals disdain modernization and do not welcome the modern economic developmental process easily. It is observed that most of the poor tribals and other marginalized people of India generally reside either very close to richest natural resource area or to the government vested land. Similarly, when the governmental authorities take initiative for modern development, like huge industrialization and multipurpose river projects etc., the authorities often choose those land properties which have already been occupied by the tribals and other marginalized communities. The state authorities have adopted the hypothesis that no development is possible without extracting the natural resources like land, water, forests and mines etc. But simultaneously we must stay on the alert to another hypothesis that the greater the development, the greater the human displacement with destruction of natural resources.

Displacement of people not only means the physical rather it has psychological implications too. Because after being displaced from an ancestral dwelling place, the potentially displaced persons would face displacement from traditional occupation and displacement from traditional culture and identity. Market centric modern developmental process makes the modern state system more dependent on natural resources of its own ignoring the poor people’s dependence. Thus with the acceleration of modern developmental process, natural resources of the country turn into commodities and notably if rehabilitation and resettlement policy, in any case, fails to satisfy the local communities or, more clearly, fails to accommodate the people with larger developmental process, the massive

environmental migration would take place and the conflicts over natural resources would disturb the whole political system of the country. Therefore, we find little difference between the British age of natural resource extraction and the present era of natural resource based modern developmental process. Conflicts, process of eviction and occurrences of resentment of the powerless masses are everywhere. More or less, the Government of independent India continued the British policy for the economic development.

Development projects, like multipurpose river projects or dams, setting up of mining and other factories and creation of park and wildlife sanctuaries have displaced millions of people of whom tribals are vast in number. From 1951 to 1990, the total number of displaced people by planned economic developmental projects range from 110 lakh to 185 lakh.³⁰ Another data source reveals that, a total of 231 lakh people have been displaced by several economic developmental projects between these periods.³¹ Between 1951 and 1990, 164.0 lakh people have been displaced by dams and out of this figure a total of 63.21 lakh people were tribal. Mining projects displaced 25.5 lakh people out of which 13.30 lakh people were tribal. 12.3 lakh people were displaced by industries, 6.0 lakh people by wildlife projects and 5.0 lakh by other development projects. Out of these figures a total of 3.13 lakh, 4.5 lakh and 1.25 lakh people were belonging to tribal communities respectively.³²

In view of the state authority, perhaps, ‘national development’ and ‘larger interest’ are prior to the satisfaction of the local people. In other words, priority will be given to the issues of ‘national development’ and ‘larger interest’ than the issues of satisfactory rehabilitation and resettlement, at least Indira Gandhi’s letter to Baba Amte brings forward such reality. On 30th August, 1984 Smt. Gandhi wrote that:

³⁰ Fernandes, Walter and E. G. Thukral, 1989, “Introduction” in Walter Fernandes and E. G. Thukral edited *Development, Displacement and Rehabilitation: Issues for a National Debate*, New Delhi, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, p. 4.

³¹ Fernandes, Walter and V. Paranjpye, 1997, *Rehabilitation Policy and Law in India: A Right to Livelihood*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, p. 15.

³² Fernandes, Walter, 1994, *Development-induced-Displacement in Tribal Areas*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, pp. 22-32.

“I am most unhappy that development projects displace tribal people from their habitat, especially as project authorities do not always take care to properly rehabilitate the affected population. But sometimes there is no alternative and we have to go ahead in the larger interest...”³³

Hyper developmentalism or tendency towards the modern development made the state system authoritarian and rendered the tribals and other marginalized people vulnerable. Observing the nature of state-sponsored developmental activities, Arundhati Roy has drawn the dynamics between the powerful state and the powerless masses. She wrote that:

“Power is fortified not just by what it destroys, but also by what it creates. Not just by what it takes, but also by what it gives. And powerlessness is reaffirmed not just by the helplessness of those who have lost, but also by the gratitude of those who have gained”.³⁴

However, politics of social movement against economic developmental projects made the civil society very strong. In many cases, civil society organizations have succeeded to drive out the multinationals to stop massive human displacement and broad environmental damage. Thus in most of the cases state-sponsored economic developmental projects have been abandoned because of prolonged social resistance by the civil society organizations.

Through the Five Year Plans, the state authority made the large dam as the icon of national development. Between 1951 and 1990, over 1,600 major dams and thousands of medium and smaller irrigation projects have been built with the attendant canal systems and the invariable consequences of water logging and soil salinisation which displaced millions of people forcibly. Most of such involuntary displacement took place in the tribal areas.³⁵ For example – the Sardar Sarovar project had enough potentiality to displace a vast range of people, basically tribals, from the catchment areas of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. When the

³³ Cited in Edward Goldsmith and Nicholas Hildyard edited *The Social and Environmental Effects of Large Dams: Volume II: Case Studies*, Wadebridge Ecological Centre, Cornwall, UK, 1986, p. 245.

³⁴ Roy, Arundhati, 1999, *The Greater Common Good*, India Book Distributor Limited, Bombay, p. 61.

³⁵ Kothari, Smitu, 1996, “Whose Nation?: The Displaced as Victims of Development” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 3, No. 24, pp. 1476-1477.

policy of resettlement has been placed before the commons, the policy highlighted the *Adivasi* people as ‘encroachers’ and denied them their rights over the land and the consequent benefits as ‘oustees’. Only the reservoir affected people were declared as the ‘oustees’ or dam evictees. More than 4,200 hectares of forest in Taloda-Akkalakua are of Maharashtra was cut to resettle the Narmada dam evictees from Maharashtra. But around 50 villages were dependent on this forest land and earlier there were *Adivasi* settlers who were called ‘encroachers’.³⁶

In the name of ‘national interest’, mining projects in Jharkhand intended to displace thousands of indigenous people such as the Santals, Mundas, Oraons, Hos, Gonds, Kharias, Bhuiyas, Bhumij, Birhors, Turi, Sadans, Kumar, Kumhars, Kurmis etc. In accordance with the government report, 1985, between 1981 and 1985, during Sixth Plan period, the Central Coalfield had acquired 1,20,300 acres of land and the Eastern Coalfields acquired 30,000 acres of land which caused displacement of 32,750 families. Besides, the Piparwar Coal Project in the North Karanpura Valley took initiative to fell 289 hectares of reserved forests clearly. Mining extraction and refineries have polluted the Damodar and Karo Rivers draining radioactive and chemically contaminated wastes.³⁷ Thus mining industry, another index of national development, made massive human displacement and produced environmental hazards. In the mid-seventies of last century Cachar Paper Mills of North Cachar Hills district of Assam reduced the forest cover which threatened the natural forest resources and the community life of the tribal people who inhabit in the area. This is not an isolated case of development victims. The Tuli Paper Mills of Nagaland in the early eighties provides the similar instance. The displaced persons had no adequate compensation. Such developmental schemes push the tribals to further marginality.³⁸ Similarly, three thermal power plants, viz., Chandrapur Thermal Power Station, Namrup Thermal Power Station and Bongaigaon Thermal Power Station in Assam

³⁶ Sangvai, Sanjay, 2007, “The Tragedy of Displacement” in Mahesh Rangarajan edited *Environmental Issues in India: A Reader*, Dorling Kindersley India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, pp. 437-438.

³⁷ Areeparampil, Mathew, 1996, “Displacement due to Mining in Jharkhand” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, No. 24, pp. 1524-1528.

³⁸ Hussain, Monirul, 2008, *Interrogating Development: State, Displacement and Popular Resistance in North East India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, p. 39.

displaced thousands of people including tribals. Severely all these power generation projects affected the tribals of both hills and plains of Assam.³⁹ In most of these cases, conflict between the project supporters and the non-supporters came to the surface of development politics raising the issues of fair compensation, proper rehabilitation and resettlement etc. In many cases, either the project has been abandoned due to such conflict or the local communities have been displaced from the proposed areas victimized by livelihood crisis and environmental pollution. However, many of such development projects proposed alternative mode of livelihood status, compensation and rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R) packages but only few projects have been implemented with fair compensation and R&R packages.

Creation of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, another pattern of development in the name of conservation, has enlarged similar kind of conflict between the marginalized communities and the governmental departments and initiators of the amusement parks. Here also the question of fair compensation is similarly important like the other development projects but in this context mainly the Forest Department itself holds the authority to redress grievances forwarded by the affected or likely to be affected people, because the Forest Department is liable to the management of forest and wildlife conservation. Therefore, possibility of conflicts arises mainly with the Forest Department. The Nagarhole National Park in Southern Karnataka attempted to protect forty tigers with Indian and foreign monetary aid. But Nagarhole is the home to about 6,000 tribals who are also dependent on the natural resources of the park. The state Forest Department wanted to evict the tribals accusing that the tribals destroy the forest and kill wild animals. In reply, the tribals viewed that they do not possess the gun, they only collect fuel-wood, fruit, honey and the partridge for their survival needs and they claimed it as their modest demand. They also viewed that the coffee planters living in the edge of the forest may poach big hunting game with gun. Dr. John G. Robinson, a biologist, wildlife conservation society, New York, came to Nagarhole and suggested to relocate the tribal people for

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 29.

the protection of wild prey for the tigers. Robinson argued that the tribals deprive the tigers from food competing for wild prey and that would cause conservation management ineffective. Thus, all over the India, the management of parks has sharply opposed the interests of tribals.⁴⁰ In the last three decades of the 20th century, there were several instances of clash between the villagers and park authorities over access to natural resources. Between 1979 and 1984, fifty-one such clashes occurred in national parks and sixty-six clashes have taken place in sanctuaries. It was accused that, the states of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur and Rajasthan do not pay any compensation in the cases of death or injury to humans on account of attacks by wild animals.⁴¹ Between 1979 and 1984, a total of 189 human deaths took place by tiger attack in West Bengal; between 1981 and 1983, damage done to the crops of worth Rs. 6.5 million due to rampaging elephants in South India; between 1974 and 1983, 622 cattle were killed by tigers or leopards near the Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka. Under these circumstances, Forest Department, in a few cases, compensated poorly and many cases remained uncompensated. In context to Gir forest of Gujarat, Forest Officials claimed that the villagers release the old and essentially useless cattle into the forests in hope that the animals will be killed by the predators and that would provide an opportunity to claim compensation.⁴² Thus conflict between the Forest Officials and forest villages regarding the claim of compensation made the conservation management further ineffective. However, in case of Gir National Park, the state authority took positive steps for the Maldhari people who are known as the ‘settled pastorals’ of Gir Forest. The Forest Department of Gujarat government allowed the Maldharis to live together with the wild animals inside the Gir forest.⁴³ Such step was followed as R&R package to prevent traumatized displacement and that provided an instance of human-wildlife coexistence.

⁴⁰ Guha, Ramachandra, 2006, *How Much Should a Person Consume?: Thinking Through the Environment*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, pp. 133-134.

⁴¹ Gadgil, Madhav and Ramachandra Guha, 1992, *ibid*, p. 234.

⁴² Saberwal, Vasant, Mahesh Rangarajan and Ashish Kothari, 2000, *People, Parks and Wildlife: Towards Coexistence*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, pp. 73-74.

⁴³ Ganguly, Vassha, 2005, “Displacement, Rehabilitation and Resettlement: The Case of Maldhari Families of Gir Forest” in *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 54, No. 1, p. 5.

The existence of tribals is not always a negative sign for wildlife conservation management. It was reported that, many times, with ill-health and in injured situation, wild animals wander into the tea garden areas and *Adivasi* settlement of Dooars region of West Bengal. If the *Adivasi* compassionate tea garden labourers observe such cases, they immediately pass the information to the Forest Department and take required action to save the wild animals from the possible threat and harm. Even for such initiative many tribals received rewards from the Forest Department.⁴⁴ Therefore, it would be very helpful to develop a cordial relationship between the tribals and the Forest Department for a healthy conservation management. In the book *The Baiga*, Verrier Elwin, defender of aboriginals, argued for the creation of National Park where the tribes would have liberty for hunting, fishing and practicing of shifting cultivation and most importantly the non-aboriginals would be prohibited to enter into this zone but the anthropologists would have privileged access. Other anthropologists, like G. S. Ghurye, criticizing Elwin, argued that if we put the tribe into a 'national park', i. e. in the anthropological zoo, such isolation would make them further marginalized.

Development and Deprivation: A Critical Analysis of the Policies of Tribal Development

Article 366 (25) of the Indian Constitution refers to Scheduled Tribes as those communities who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. According to this article only those communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending Act of parliament will be considered to be "Scheduled Tribes". The Advisory Committee of SC/ST Lists (Lokur Committee), 1965 laid down essential characteristics for a community to be identified as Scheduled Tribes: a) indications of primitive traits, b) distinctive culture, c) shyness of contact with the community at large, d) geographical isolation and e) backwardness. Under article 342 of the Indian constitution, the central government notified that presently there

⁴⁴ The information gathered from Mr. Amit Chanda, an active member of Cooch Behar Mountaineers Club (an environmental NGO), Cooch Behar, West Bengal, India.

are 700 tribes in India out of which 75 tribal communities are Primitive Tribal Groups presently known as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) who are characterized by: a) a pre-agriculture level of technology, b) a stagnant or declining population, c) extremely low literacy and d) a subsistence level of economy. As per Census 2011, the Scheduled Tribes (STs) constitute 8.6% of the total population of India and their number is around 10.43 crore.⁴⁵ The Census 1951 recorded the total tribal population of 1,91,16,498 which was 5.36% of the total population of India and counted 212 tribes.⁴⁶ The 1971 Census recorded over 400 tribal communities nearly of 38 million people which constituted nearly 6.9% of the total population.⁴⁷ Since 1950s, the Government of India is taking several affirmative actions on the socio-economic development for the tribals and also for other marginalized communities. On the contrary, in the name of 'national development' and or 'national interest', government is also taking those decisions which are predominantly adverse to the policies of the development of tribals and other marginalized people. For the larger interest of the country, contradiction between the development policies is undesirable. Contradiction within the government policies on development make the people anti-authoritarian. Every now and then, social movements are emerging out against the government authority because of the contradiction of one development policy with the other policy of development. For the socio-economic progress of the *Adivasis*, Nehru adopted 'tribal panchsheel' which aimed at promoting tribal integration. However, Verrier Elwin in this context played a vital role; he convinced Nehru for taking initiative on the socio-cultural development of the tribal masses. Thus Elwin brought a constitutional movement in the independent India for tribal development. The policy of 'tribal panchsheel' emphasized on the following aspects:

⁴⁵ *Annual Report 2013-14*, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, 2014, p. 31 available at www.tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/CMS/Documents/201407280104442396450AnnualReport2013-14.pdf accessed on 3rd July 2014.

⁴⁶ Verma, Mahendra Mohan, 1996, *Tribal Development India: Programmes and Perspectives*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, p. 13; Atal, Yogesh, 2012, *Sociology: A Study of the Social Sphere*, Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, p. 338.

⁴⁷ Chandra, Bipan, Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee, 2008, *India Since Independence*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, p. 135.

“a) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture; b) tribal rights in land and forest should be respected; c) we should try to train and build up a team of their people to do the work of administration and development; d) we should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions and e) we should judge results not by statistics or the amount of money spent but by the quality of human character that is evolved”.⁴⁸

Therefore, Nehru’s policy was not against tribal rights over natural resources and ownership and administration over a particular territory where they practice their traditional occupation and culture. But hypnotized by the ideology of hyper-developmentalism Nehru hailed big dams as the ‘temples of modern India’. Thus Nehru symbolized mega dam as the icon of modern economic development and he failed to realize that the big dams would cause massive tribal displacement, violate their traditional rights and disintegrate the tribals.

According to the Article 338 of the Indian constitution, the president should set up a National Commission for the Scheduled Castes to investigate all matters relating to the constitutional safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and to report to the president. Again, in accordance with the Article 338-A, the President should set up a National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes to investigate all matters relating to the constitutional safeguards for the Scheduled Tribes and to report to the President. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes was established through 89th Amendment Act of 2003. This Amendment Act has bifurcated the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes into two separate commissions, viz., a) National Commission for Scheduled Castes and b) National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.⁴⁹ According to the Article 339, the controlling power over the administration of Scheduled Areas and the welfare of Scheduled Tribes is vested on the Union. In accordance with the Article 339 (1), the president

⁴⁸ Cited in Rann Singh Mann’s *Culture and Integration of Indian Tribes*, M. D. Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1993, p. 36.

⁴⁹ *The Eighty Ninth Amendment Act, 2003* available at www.indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/amend89.htm accessed on 4th July 2014.

may appoint a commission at any time but compulsorily after 10 years of the commencement of the constitution to report on the administration of the Scheduled Areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the states. Under this provision U. N. Dhebar Commission was appointed in 1960. The commission submitted its report in 1961. After a long gap Dilip Singh Bhuria Commission, the second commission, was formed in 2002.

The first tribal commission comprising six members headed by U. N. Dhebar observed that land alienation, the denial of forest rights and displacement by the development projects are the major problems which tribals are facing. The commission also examined the state policy's failure to rescue the tribals from their impoverished situation, incapability of the state machinery to prevent the loss of land to the outsiders and to check the exploitative activities of money lenders. Simultaneously, the commission observed that the major power projects and steel plants accelerated by Five-Year Plan is resulting a sustainable displacement of the tribal people. In matters of depletion of natural resources by the tribals, the committee commented that; we put this complaint to some unsophisticated tribals. They countered the complaint by asking how they could destroy the forest as they do not own trucks, they hardly had even a bullock cart, they use forest resources only for their fuel needs, to produce warm in the winter months, to construct or repair their huts and carry on their little cottage industries etc. The tribals accused that the ex-Zamindars are devastating the vast areas of forest land rights in front of the forest officials. The forest contractors are also exploiting the tribals by denying their traditional rights over the forest. The tribals argued that the process of industrialization, urbanization and other developmental projects has provided the outsiders to destroy the forest wealth and other natural resources and as a result tribals have been exploited.⁵⁰ But Dhebar Commission report failed to convince the state authority to prevent traumatized displacement of tribals resulted by the dam project over Narmada river. Like Debar commission, the Dilip Singh Bhuria Commission also agree with the fact that following the Nehruvian paternalism, state

⁵⁰ Guha, Ramachandra, 2007, "Adivasi, Naxalites and Indian Democracy" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLII, No. 32, p. 3307.

authority has failed to serve the interest of the tribals. Most of the times, following the Nehruvian model, the state authority took the initiative of economic development or for Special Economic Zone in the tribal areas which are rich in natural resources. Consequently, than the non-tribals, the tribals have been exploited and evicted from their traditional places of habitation.⁵¹ The process of tribal eviction and the denial of tribal rights over natural resources continued. The state authority has no obligation to follow the commission's recommendation; the authority only receives report and takes suggestion to overcome the barriers in the way of administration in the Tribal areas. It is expected to have a Third Tribal Commission having more constitutional powers to influence the state machinery.

On 24th December, 1996, Government of India enacted Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act, 1996 or PESA to empower the Gram Sabhas to conduct self-administration for the management of their natural resources. This act is an extension of the provisions of Part IX of the Indian constitution relating to the panchayati raj administration in the Scheduled areas. The act reveals that the "Scheduled Areas" is to be defined in accordance with the Clause (1) of the Article 244 of the constitution. PESA made a provision that, a state legislation on the panchayats in the scheduled areas shall be taking care of the customary law, social and religious practices and traditional management of community resources. The act further clarifies that the Gram Sabhas in the scheduled areas will be considered as the competent authority to take decisions on the plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development. The act entrusted the panchayats for planning and management of the minor water bodies in the scheduled areas.⁵² Thus, PESA provides an opportunity for self-rule by the people who are dependent on the land, water and forest resources. Therefore, PESA is a unique step to protect and preserve the identity and culture of the tribals and other marginalized people. But the implementation process of the act is not so smooth. In spite of having millions of ST

⁵¹ Munshi, Indra, 2012, "Introduction" in Indra Munshi edited *The Adivasi Question: Issues of Land, Forest and Livelihood*, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi, p. 4.

⁵² *Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act, 1996* available at www.tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/CMS/Documents/201211290242170976562pesa6636533023.pdf accessed on 4th July 2014.

peoples in the states of Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, there is no scheduled area.⁵³

PESA paved the way for tribal autonomy in the scheduled and tribal areas included under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the constitution. In accordance with this act, the money lending activities, land acquisition or transfer of land etc. are strictly regulated. On the contrary, the act provides power to the Gram Sabhas in matters of control over Minor Forest Products (MFPs), management of village markets, control over social sector programmes etc. PESA ensures the reservation of seats for the STs at the village panchayats. In the North-East and in some other parts of peninsular India, PESA encouraged the tribals to participate in the local administration, this is a noteworthy success. But in matters of the control over MFPs, control over money lending activities, awareness and training programmes, implementation of development projects, rehabilitation and resettlement plan etc. PESA is not so effective which had to be expected. For example – in Barwani and Jhabua districts of Madhya Pradesh, deficiency of rainfalls took place since 1999. Some parts of these districts had been officially declared as drought prone areas. For these two districts, financial aids between Rs. 3 and 4 crores each had been sanctioned for relief works but other drought prone *Adivasi* regions of the state did not receive any grant. *Adivasi* mass organizations launched intense protest movement demanding sufficient relief. In spite of the initiatives taken by the Gram Sabhas, the *Adivasis* were forced to move towards the *Sahukars* (persons dealing with money) in absence of any support system provided by the administration. Thus, Sahukars were taking the chance to continue money lending business with interest rates of 10% per month or more. It was continued due to weak tribal mass organization.⁵⁴ In case of the setting up of mining projects in Odisha, the implementation of PESA was ambiguous. Before land acquisition for mining projects, proper consultation with the local panchayats was compulsory. But the consultation process has been conspicuous by its absence in Kashipur and Lanjigarh. However, by the Samantha judgment in

⁵³ Roy Burman, B. K., 2006, “Creating Consternation” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 41, No. 34, p. 3647.

⁵⁴ Banerjee, Rahul, 2014, “Actualizing Adivasi Self-Rule – The only Panacea” in *Yojana*, Vol. 58, January 2014 (*Tribal and Marginalized Communities*), p. 25.

1997, Supreme Court of India protected the constitutional rights of the *Adivasis* against the mining companies that attempted to acquire their land with the help of the state government of Odisha.⁵⁵ The state authority must keep a careful watch on the implementation of PESA especially when the state authority would take decisions on developmental projects. Industrialization and damming as development in scheduled areas as well as in tribal areas is quite difficult. Because the Act made a provision that:

“The Gram Sabha or panchayats at the appropriate level shall be consulted before making the acquisition of land in the Scheduled Areas for development project and before re-settling 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.”⁵⁶

Therefore, before land acquisition from the scheduled areas for development projects, the state authority must look after the interest of the dwellers and must provide the satisfactory alternatives to the people of scheduled areas otherwise the politics of Gram Sabha would pose a serious challenge against the development projects because the questions of proper rehabilitation and resettlement and satisfactory compensation are vital to the process of development projects.

To restore and recognize the pre-existing rights of the tribals, the government of India introduced “The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006”. The act is also known as Forest Rights Act or FRA, 2006. The objective of the act is to nullify the age old injustice done to the tribals. The act was passed by the parliament on 18th December, 2006 and from 1st January, 2008 the act came into force followed by the notification of the rules. This is the first initiative taken by the government to protect the forest rights of the tribals and other marginalized communities at the first time after Indian independence. While Indian Forest Act, 1952 unfortunately continued to follow the

⁵⁵ Padel, Felix and Samarendra Das, 2007, “Adivasis Shining: Standing up to the Face of an Invasion of Aluminum Companies in Orissa” in Bhabani Shankar Nayak edited *Nationalizing Crisis: The Political Economy of Public Policy in Contemporary India*, Atlantic Publisher and Distributors, New Delhi, pp. 254-255.

⁵⁶ See Section 4 (i) of the *Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act, 1996*.

colonial legacy as the act did not accommodate the forest dwellers in managing the forest resources, forest policy of 1988 gave the formal recognition for the Joint Forest Management. Most importantly, the policy highlighted the issue of the participation of forest communities to conduct the forest management system.⁵⁷ But the forest policy of 1988 was silent about the rights of traditional communities over the forest resources. Section 3 (1) of FRA, 2006 guarantees four types of rights for the forest dwellers:

- a) *Title Rights*: i. e. ownership of forest land of maximum 4 hectares which is being cultivated by a tribal family or family belonging to forest community as on 13th December, 2005;
- b) *Use Rights*: i. e. ownership of minor forest produce, grazing areas, pastoralist routs etc.;
- c) *Relief and Development Rights*: i. e. right to avail basic amenities and proper rehabilitation in case of forced displacement or illegal eviction from the forests; and
- d) *Forest Management Rights*: i. e. right to participate in the forest and wildlife management system for protection.⁵⁸

In accordance with the Indian Forest act, 1927, the Government or the Forest Department can declare any area as reserved forest and protected forest.⁵⁹ On the contrary, Wildlife (protection) Act, 1972 empowers the government or Forest Department to declare any area as ‘protected area’, viz., national park, sanctuary, conservation reserve and community reserve.⁶⁰ But ‘The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Amendment Rules, 2012’ has curtailed the power of Forest Department and enhanced the power of Gram

⁵⁷ Sinha, Himadri, 2006, *People and Forest: Unfolding the Participation Mystique*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, pp. 14-15.

⁵⁸ See Chapter II of the Act entitled *The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006* published in The Gazette of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, 2nd January 2007, New Delhi available at www.tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/CMS/Documents/201211290401163173828File1036.pdf accessed on 5th July, 2014.

⁵⁹ Purohit, Mona, 2007, *Wildlife Laws and Its Impact on Tribes*, Deep and Deep Publications, Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, p. 48.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 88.

Sabha to ensure the forest rights of the traditional communities. This amendment rules empowers the Gram Sabha to issue transit passes in relation to transportation of minor forest produce. In other words, following the provisions of this amendment rules, forest dwellers can transport minor forest produce through appropriate means of transport. This amendment rules extended the functions of Gram Sabha. Rules state that the Gram Sabha will perform the functions on the receiving and hearing of forest rights claims as well as passing of resolution on forest rights claims. Besides, Sub-Divisional Level Committee, District Level Committee, State Level Monitoring Committee will have specific functions on the proper implementation of the Forest Rights Act. No authority is able to reject the forest rights claims for being absent from the field verification process. A status report will be made by the State Level Monitoring Committee on the basis of the progress of the implementation process.⁶¹

The implementation process of the act is not favourable to the marginalized communities. In West Bengal, the Gram Sabha has been replaced by the Gram Sansad denoting the village level constituency under the panchayati raj system. FRA, 2006 has given the authority to Gram Sabha or village assembly to initiate the process for determining the nature and extent of individual and community forest rights and responsibility to constitute committees for the protection of wildlife, forest and biodiversity. But order issued by Department of Backward Classes Welfare and the Panchayat and Rural Development Department allowed the Gram Sansad to take required steps on the implementation of Forest Rights of the forest dwellers. Such inconsistencies ‘betrayed the spirit’, made the implementation process difficult. Due to faulty and biased implementation, stiff opposition came from National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers and Nagarik Mancha (Citizen’s Forum), Kolkata. In June 2009, a writ petition was filed in High Court by Nagarik Mancha against the state government.⁶² The implementation of FRA is tardy especially in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) influenced states. Controversies arise due to the conscious move

⁶¹ *The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Amendment Rules, 2012* available at [www.daman.nic.in/acts-rules%5CSocial-welfare-department%5Cdocuments/FRA%20Rule_2012_complied%20version%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.daman.nic.in/acts-rules%5CSocial-welfare-department%5Cdocuments/FRA%20Rule_2012_complied%20version%20(1).pdf) accessed on 5th July, 2014.

⁶² Jha, Sourish, 2010, “Process Betrays the Spirit: Forest Rights Act in Bengal” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLV, No. 33, pp. 24-27.

of Forest Department to dominate the Forest Rights Committee by nominating the members of Joint Forest Management body to Forest Rights Committees in contravention of the provisions of the Act. To implement the FRA, the Forest Department maintained its stranglehold by sidelining Gram Sabhas, Forest Committees etc. However, in Odisha, ‘Operation Green Hunt’ as a counter-Naxalite operation came in the way of the implementation of the act but due to Naxalite threat, the processing of applications of claims and other necessary actions could not be undertaken.⁶³ As on 31st March, 2014, the total number of claims filed under FRA was 37,42,576 out of which 30,53,373 claims have been disposed off and 14,32,556 titles were issued. Odisha has the distinction of issuing highest number of titles which is 3,31,939 out of which 3,28,808 are individual titles and 3,131 are community titles. Andhra Pradesh has the distinction of having highest forest area over which titles have been issued under FRA. The total forest area over which the title has been issued in Andhra Pradesh is 14,56,542 acres.⁶⁴

Recently Indian parliament has passed “The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013” (*hereafter* LARR Act, 2013) and the act came into force from 1st January 2014. The modest aim of the act is to make a balance between the necessities of the economic development for the country and need to protect the life and livelihood of the affected people. This act brought changes in the land acquisition act of 1894. The act is applicable when the government acquires land for ‘public purpose’. According to the LARR Act, 2013, ‘public purpose’ means planned development or improvement or progress of public sectors, economic activities, military forces, conservation structures, transport system and realization of local demands etc. Section 2 of the Act illuminates that when the government acquires land for private companies, the consent of at least 80% of the affected families; and in case of public-private project, consent of at least 70% of the affected families is required through prior information before acquisition process. The act also endeavours to protect the forest rights of the

⁶³ Thomas, K.V., 2014, *Left-wing Extremism and Human Rights: The Role of Civil Liberties Groups in Andhra Pradesh*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, p. 100.

⁶⁴ *Annual Report 2013-14*, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, p. 210.

Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers and rights of the cultivators who are solely dependent on their agricultural land. The act ensures that the compensation will be provided to the affected families computing the market value of the land that is to be acquired by the government for ‘public purpose’. The market value would be determined by four times the market value for the land acquired from the rural areas and two times the market value for the land acquired in urban areas. The act provides rehabilitation and resettlement package to the affected families and the package include – additional subsistence allowance, additional entitlement of a job, additional upfront compensation, additional upfront resettlement allowance etc. In other words, with land compensation, other additional advantages such as housing facility, employment opportunity and other form of livelihood security and pattern of subsistence will be provided to the affected families. If the affected families belong to the SC/ST community, they would have an additional land grant of 2.5 acres per affected family, an additional assistance of Rs. 50,000 (US\$ 1,100) and free land for community and social gatherings and special Fifth and Sixth Scheduled area benefits.⁶⁵

Critics argue that the adhoc formula for the determination of compensation amount and numerous entitlements for the unlimited number of potentially affected families would guarantee neither social justice nor the efficient use of resources.⁶⁶ Numerous provisions and the legal complexities would make land acquisition process difficult. Especially, state authority and entrepreneurs of industrial projects would face difficulties in acquiring land from the rural areas because in accordance with the act the rate of compensation is very high and usually the project cost would be very high than the benefits in case of rural land acquisition. The provisions of LARR Act, 2013 would intensify the possibility of people’s resistance against state-sponsored developmental projects if the state authority fails to provide proper facilities to the affected people or potential displacees as promised by the Act.

⁶⁵ The *Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013* available at www.indiacode.nic.in/acts-in-pdf/302013.pdf accessed on 7th July, 2014.

⁶⁶ Ghatak, Maitreesh & Parikshit Ghosh, 2011, “The Land Acquisition Bill: A Critique and a Proposal” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVI, No. 41, pp. 65-66.

National Food Security Act, 2013 intends to consider ‘the needs of the vulnerable groups especially in remote areas and other areas which are difficult to access, hilly and tribal areas for ensuring the food security’.⁶⁷ It is important to note that the Oraons consume around 87 common native plants as diet either whole or in part, may be flowers, roots, seeds and or fruits and the Mundas use 71 different wild plants as pot-herbs. Some of the plants are eaten raw and some are eaten as vegetable after cook.⁶⁸ But the act did not highlight on the dependence of the tribals or intricate relationship with nature for wild food. There are so many wild plants and herbs which are not cultivate and grow in the wilder spaces around villages, in the fallows, in select forest patches, along streams and on the bunds of fields and most importantly one can include these plants and herbs in daily diet only for the cost of going out to collect them from the available space. Therefore, an official recognition is highly required to ensure food security for the tribal and other vulnerable groups who are mostly dependent on the wild food for their normal diet and nutrition.⁶⁹

Tribal Movements: Tribal Politics over Natural Resources

Social scientists have identified a number of tribal movements that arose since colonial period to modern India. V. Raghaviah identified 78 tribal revolts between 1778 and 1971.⁷⁰ Kathleen Gough explored 77 tribal uprising between 1770’s and 1970’s.⁷¹ Towards the close of 1976, Anthropological Survey of India identified 36 ongoing tribal movements in India. Among 36 tribal movements – 14 were found in the North-East India and the rests were observed in Eastern, Central, Western and Southern parts of India. Tribal movements in North-East India include – political movements for the transition from the politics of insurgency to that of integration, socio-cultural movements for new identity, script based and language

⁶⁷ See Chapter XII of *National Food Security Act, 2013* available at www.indiacode.nic.in/acts-in-pdf/202013.pdf accessed on 7th July, 2014.

⁶⁸ Xaxa, Virginius, 2008, *ibid*, pp. 102-103.

⁶⁹ Ramnath, Madhu, 2014, “The Food Bill, Wild Foods and the Adivasi People” in *Yojana*, Vol. 58, January 2014 (Tribal and Marginalized Communities), pp. 27-29.

⁷⁰ Raghaviah, V., 1979, “Tribal Revolts in Chronological Order: 1778 to 1971” in A. R. Desai edited *Peasant Struggles in India*, Oxford University, Bombay, pp. 23-27.

⁷¹ Gough, Kathleen, 1974, “Indian Peasant Uprisings” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 9, No. 32/34, p. 1391-1412.

movements etc. In Eastern India, tribal movements emerged as a movement for separate statehood and upward mobility movement, for example – Jharkhand movement. In Central India – Bhagat movement and the movement by Gond tribes emerged for political autonomy. Tribal movements of Northern parts of Andhra Pradesh took a militant turn for the same political reason. Western India reported four movements among the Bhils, Halpatis and others for agrarian development, rights of tribal peasants and political autonomy. In the Southern part of India, tribal movements were observed among the small isolated primitive tribes as an incipient political process.⁷²

To K. S. Singh, tribal movements in India can be categorized into four types: a) political autonomy movement, b) agrarian and forest based movement, c) sanskritization process and d) cultural movement on script and language.⁷³ Surajit Sinha identified five types of tribal movements: a) ethnic (tribal) rebellion, b) reform movement, c) movement for recognition as ‘tribal’ states within the Indian union, d) violent secessionist movement and e) agrarian unrest and communist movement.⁷⁴ ‘Sanskritization’ is synonymous to ‘reform movement’ and ‘cultural movement’ is similar to ‘ethnic movement’. B. K. Roy Burman divides tribal movements into two categories: a) proto-national and b) sub-national.⁷⁵ To Roy Burman, several parameters can be envisaged behind the specific manifestation of resentment among the primitive and post-primitive group of tribals. The parameters are:

- i) Response to threats to the privacy of habitat,
- ii) Response to threats to access to and control of resources,
- iii) Response to disruption of traditional roles in the total interaction set-up,
- iv) Search for new meanings of the relationship between man and nature,
- v) Search for new meanings of the relationship between individuals and society,

⁷² Singh, K. S., 1982, “Transformation of Tribal Society: Integration vs. Assimilation” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 17, No. 34, p. 1376.

⁷³ *ibid*, pp. 1376-1384.

⁷⁴ Sinha, Surajit, 2002, “Tribal Solidarity Movements in India: A Review” in Ghanshyam Shah edited *Social Movements and the State*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, pp. 251-252.

⁷⁵ Roy Burman, B. K., 1971, “National Movements among the Tribes” in *Social Democracy*, Annual Number, Vol. IV, No. 3 & 4, pp. 25-33.

- vi) Search for new frontiers of identity,
- vii) Search for a more satisfactory system of control of resources,
- viii) Search for a more satisfactory system of organization of community power at all levels.⁷⁶

According to Roy Burman, proto-national movement is the outcome of the transformation of tribal people and society from 'tribalism' to 'nationalism'. On the other hand, sub-national movement emerges due to social disorganization. A section of acculturated elite people take part at the forefront of this movement. Proto-national movement is a phase of contraction of identity. Proto-national movement results from the orbit of development whereas; sub-national movement is the product of the disparities of development. Under the parameter of 'response to threats against access to and control of resources' Roy Burman exemplified two types of forest movement: a) 'revolts against imposition of state or state sponsored capitalism on primitive social base in the forests' and b) 'movement against alienation of tribal land'.⁷⁷ These movements can be considered as 'environmental movement' by the tribals because environmental movement is nothing but the struggle for rights over natural resources. Mostly Eastern, Western and Central parts of India have witnessed such movements by the tribals since long back than the other parts. S. M. Dubey divided tribal movements in North-East India into four categories: a) religious and social reform movement, b) movement for separate statehood, c) insurgent movement and d) movement for assertions of cultural rights.⁷⁸ But such categorization is not satisfactory on account of present day North-East India. Since the last three decades of 20th century a number of anti-industrialization and anti-dam movements have been identified mostly at the tribal belt of North-East India where during protest tribals have raised the issues of human security depending upon the land, water and forest resources. In all over India, there are so many instances on tribal movements which are emerging centering around the issues of forest rights,

⁷⁶ Roy Burman, B. K., 2008, "Challenges and Responses in Tribal India" in M. S. A. Rao edited *Social Movements in India: Studies in Peasant, Backward Classes, Sectarian, Tribal and Women's Movements*, Manohar, New Delhi, pp. 317-319.

⁷⁷ *ibid*, pp. 320-337.

⁷⁸ Dubey, S. M., 2006, "Inter-Ethnic Alliance, Tribal Movements and Integration in Northeast India" in K. S. Singh edited *Tribal Movements in India*, Vol. I, Manohar, New Delhi, pp. 11-12.

environmental protection and human security. Sometimes these movements dignify the ideals of tribalism for the security and or very survival of the vulnerable sections of tribal societies and sometimes predominates 'environmentalism' transcending tribalism in hope that the ideals of environmentalism would secure both the tribals and non-tribals from the negative side of the state and market. Ghanshyam Shah's typology of tribal movement is most acceptable because shah mentioned forest rights movement, movement against displacement and environmental destruction as tribal movements. To Shah, tribal movements can be divided into five types: a) ethnic movements which include culture/religion identity, b) agrarian and forest rights movements, c) environmental movements, d) involuntary displacement and rehabilitation movements and e) political movements around the nationality question for a separate state.⁷⁹

According to the sociology of environmental movements, the participants of the environmental movements deeply emphasized on the issues of human security, right to livelihood, right to receive proper rehabilitation. Therefore, to some extent, anti-displacement movement, movement against land alienation and acquisition, movement to save the sources of livelihood and local culture based on the natural resources and rehabilitation movement can be considered as 'environmental movement'. In contemporary environmental movements in India, tribals as well as other marginalized people have been identified as victims of industrialization and or affected groups of state led growth or developmental projects and the people belonging to these groups have also participated in the movement in a vast range but the organizational base of the movement is strengthened by a group of people who belong to middle class family, intellectual's community and to the arena of local and regional party politics. Most significantly, non-tribal, non-vulnerable and non-poor people take the leadership position in this form of collective mobilization.

It would be relevant to note that the tribal movements in India had its origin in the experiences of the peasant mobilization by the tribesman. Ramachandra Guha

⁷⁹ Shah, Ghanshyam, 2004, *Social Movements in India: A Review of Literature*, Second Edition, Sage Publications, New Delhi, p. 96.

views that "...a large segment of what presently passes for the environmental movement is a peasant movement draped in the cloth of environmentalism. Thus a number of local initiatives in defence of traditional rights in land, water and forests and other living resources collectively constitute what sympathetic intellectuals have termed the 'environmental' movement".⁸⁰ Peasant resistance itself was the first organized social protest among the tribals. Gradually, when the tribals have become conscious about their rights, their resistance got typical colours which transcend agrarianism. Santal and Kol uprisings of 1832 and 1855 respectively were the instances of tribal peasant resistance against the non-tribals or outsiders or *dikus* who made the life of the original settlers intolerable. It was a movement against the feudal exploitation.⁸¹ The leaders of the movements were purely from tribal societies and professionally were the cultivators. On the other hand, after Indian independence, Naxalbari movement of West Bengal in 1967 and peasant struggle in Khammam and Karimnagar districts of Andhra Pradesh in 1969 were communist tribal revolts against the exploitation and injustice done to the tribals by the *zamindars*, landlords and even by the popular government.⁸² Here the organizational base was developed by the communist ideology and leadership came from the tribal peasant background and also from the non-tribal political groups. The movement was basically a struggle against land alienation, loss of forest rights, state intervention into the life and culture of the tribals. Both in the pre-colonial and post-colonial India, tribal revolts emerged due to the loss of control over their natural resources. Revolts in the tribal areas originated due to the question of forest rights. The tribal revolts attempted to drive out the outsiders to restore a 'golden past' where they had enough liberty to consume the natural resources.⁸³ Therefore, to Ramachandra Guha, most of the tribal resistance in India was basically land and forest based struggle. However, K. S. Singh argued that, movement of the indigenous people in post-modernist phase is the movement for self-determination or self-management of the resources and identity

⁸⁰ Guha, Ramachandra, 1988, "Ideological Trends in India Environmentalism" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXIII, No. 49, p. 2579.

⁸¹ Guha, Ranjit, 1999, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp. 22-23.

⁸² Gough, Kathleen, 1974, *ibid*, pp. 1403-1405.

⁸³ Guha, Ramachandra, 1983, "Forestry in British and Post-British India: A Historical Analysis" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 18, No. 44, p. 1884.

and ethnicity oriented movement. The environmental movement focused on the communities, their relationship to nature, interaction with nation and their worldview. Therefore, growing concern for environment, particularly bio-diversity, pluralism, ethnicity and identity all are interrelated issues and highlighted all these issues of tribal movements are assuming new characters. But presently all are becoming more and more identity based movements with various issues concerning control over resources etc. being considered as ramifications of this central issue.⁸⁴

Scholars classified tribal movements in India on the basis of geographical distribution, chronology, aims and objectives and the issues of land, ethnicity, political autonomy, secession, mobility and identity. The educated middle class people prominently took the position of leadership in various contexts of the movements but between 1795 and 1860 the leadership came from upper sections of the society and after 1860 the leaders came from lowest rungs of the society. Significantly, in the agrarian and forest based tribal movements, women played a considerable role than the men.⁸⁵ The urban middle class leaders have tried to connect the localized and isolated peasant and tribal movements to a wider struggle against the undesirable aspects of colonial rule.⁸⁶ Before independence, the middle class leaders have intensified the nationalist movement mobilizing the peasants and tribals but after the independence the educated tribal elites belonging to middle class family emerged and came to lead the movement on political line. Emphasizing on the political autonomy or local self-government, middle class tribal elites organized intense resistance in context to North-East India for the solidarity of indigenous tribes.⁸⁷ Thus developed ethnic nationalism even sometimes on militant way, echoed 'sons of the soil' slogan and gradually solidarity concern made a transition from nationalism to regionalism. On the contrary, the environmental politics among the tribals has developed another dimension, i. e. a transformation from regionalism to

⁸⁴ Singh, K. S., 1998, "Introduction" in K. S. Singh edited *Antiquity to Modernity in Tribal India: Tribal Movements in India*, Vol. IV, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, pp. 9-10.

⁸⁵ Xaxa, Virginius, 2008, *ibid*, p. 121.

⁸⁶ Bandyopadhyaya, Sekhar, 2004, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, p. 205.

⁸⁷ Weiner, Myron, 1978, *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, p. 81.

localism in which middle class tribal leaders emphasized on the rights of the tribals over natural resources. In Alirajpur tehsil of Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh, local organization by the urban middle class activist and local *adivasi* people, called *Sangath*, finds that the reserve forest has a great contribution to the subsistence economy of the local tribals which is known as *nevad* (cultivation within the forest land encroached by the tribals). *Sangath* viewed that the forest will be destroyed due to illicit felling by contractors and expensive afforestation programmes will be launched without any lasting benefits. Simultaneously, forests are also being destroyed due to increase in the tribal population and their land hunger. The *Sangath* argues, the problems can be solved by empowering the tribals to control the resource. The tribals should have to possess authority to decide the best measures for the management of the forest. As a result, their survival needs will be secured and conservation management will also be effective. Thus *Sangath's* politics tried to secure the partial control over the forest.⁸⁸ Notwithstanding, conflicts were measured between the middle class activists and *adivasi* leaders within *Sangath* politics. The middle class activists have highlighted the model of sustainable development to improve their condition but the *adivasi* leaders were demanding more control over resources to be 'masters of their own destiny'. The middle class activists viewed that it would be best to situate the tribals very close to nature in the forest but the *adivasi* leaders replied that the forest-tribal relationship for economic dependency is not a forced provision rather than chosen and their lifestyle would improve if they had enough access to land.⁸⁹

During 1930s, a demand for separate political entity was raised through Jharkhand movement, however, it can be noted that, the ecological questions were very significant in the movement. The tribals have protested against – the alienation from land and forest resources, the uncontrolled influx of outsiders who usually monopolized jobs and positions of power and the grave neglect of infrastructural

⁸⁸ Baviskar, Amita, 2003, "Tribal Politics and Discourses of Indian Environmentalism" in Paul Greenough and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing edited *Nature in the Global South: Environmental Projects in South and Southeast Asia*, Duke University Press, USA, pp. 294-298.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 309-313

development by the government.⁹⁰ In 1978, tribal movement in Singhbhum district of Jharkhand originated raising the issues of forest rights. The movement was known as ‘tree war’ or ‘forest *andolan*’. As a symbolic protest against the threat to livelihood and identity of the tribals, the *adivasis* took destructive strategy by felling trees in the forests; hence, the movement was ‘*jungal katai andolan*’. Encroachment by the Forest Department on *adivasi* village and their customary rights on forest, exploitation and harassment of tribal by forest officials, commercialization of forests and resultant pauperization of tribal, large scale legal and illegal alienation of tribal land, displacement of tribal due to various development projects without proper rehabilitation and adequate compensation, increasing unemployment in the area due to closure of mines and the frequent drought conditions existing in the area were the root causes behind the tribal unrest in the forest areas of Singhbhum. At its first moment, the leadership came from tribal leaders like Magi Dorai and Jogo Munda under *Samyukta Morcha* between 1981 and 1983. Santal, Ho and the Mundas were the main participants of the movement.⁹¹ Preferably, tribal movement as social movement is not devoid of politics and environmental questions. Before independence, in the second phase of the tribal autonomy movement of Chhotanagpur, from 1920 to 1938, tribal movement for political autonomy was dominated by *Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj* (Chhotanagpur Improvement Society) which was formed by the tribal urban middle class Christian people. This period witnessed the development of mini-revivalism among the tribes by the Samaj. In the fourth phase, between 1949 and 1963, the movement was directed by ‘Jharkhand Party’ which originated from the regional level but the party was open for all. Thus, as the formative factor, the movement witnessed a transition from ‘ethnicity to regionalism’.⁹²

⁹⁰ Gadgil, Madhav and Ramachandra Guha, 1995, *Ecology and Equity: The Use and Abuse of Nature in Contemporary India*, Penguin Book, New Delhi, p. 95.

⁹¹ Das, Ashis Kumar, 2008, “Behind Bow and Arrow: A Look into the Tribal Unrest on Forest Movement of East and West Singhbhum, Jharkhand” in Deepak Kumar Behra and Georg Pfeffer edited *Contemporary Society: Identity, Intervention and Ideology in Tribal India and Beyond* (Tribal Studies, Vol. 7), Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, pp. 212-224.

⁹² Singh, K. S., 2006, “Tribal Autonomy Movements in Chhotanagpur” in K. S. Singh edited *Tribal Movements in India*, Vol. II, Manohar, New Delhi, pp. 3-5.

The World Commission on Dams and the Supreme Court of India did not hint for a satisfactory solution of the Narmada dam problem. The possibility of massive displacement, including huge number of tribal, was inevitable; hence resistance movement by the civil society organizations continued unabatedly. Gujarat enthusiastically supports the dam project with the highest height possible, Maharashtra mildly opposed the dam and the state of Madhya Pradesh was largely ambiguous. The conflict between the supporters and non-supporters of Sardar Sarovar Project and or damming Narmada generated an ideological debate behind the reality of state vs. civil society conflict. The advocates of modern development were popularizing 'developmentalism'. Clearly the supporters yearned for development even, if necessary, displacing the people and rendering them 'ecological refugees'. On the contrary, the non-supporters insisted for the abandonment of the dam project even if only limited displacement occurs. The non-supporters indulged in the politics of 'environmentalism' demanding the integrity of environment that is to be maintained in its pristine purity. Thus the blind supporters of dam were advocating 'mal-development' and the opponents were championing 'anti-development'; both were at the unsustainable positions.⁹³ The protest over Narmada dam was, of course, a struggle for environmental justice, and also a movement against tribal displacement and rehabilitation movement in which participants came from cross-section of the people. But the tribals, NGOs and middle-class activists from different occupational and professional background were the key players.⁹⁴ Apart from the tribal displacement problem, reduction of forest land due to resettlement in the forest land was another problem even the policy of rehabilitation and resettlement was unjustified. The state government resettled more than 1,500 displaced persons in the barren land, waterlogged tracts and in the areas where sanitation, drinking water, educational and employment facilities were unavailable and most of the residential sites were surrounded by anti-social elements. Such anti-tribal policy intensified the tribal resentment against the government's

⁹³ Oommen, T. K., 2006, "Coping with Development Pathologies: Resistance to Displacement" in *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 55, No. 2, pp. 272-273.

⁹⁴ Xaxa, Virginius, 2008, *ibid*, p. 56.

policy of rehabilitation and resettlement.⁹⁵ The protest against Narmada dam in the tribal areas became radical when the charismatic leaders and social activists like Medha Patkar and Baba Amte took the position of leadership. They were considered as the outsiders who organized the movement in a radical way.⁹⁶ Medha Patkar admitted that, in the Narmada struggle, both the tribal and non-tribal communities were the strength of the people's movement and, more than ever, mobilization of tribal communities had special implication on the movement. Patkar viewed that, in the people's movement for Narmada, importance was given to both the non-consumerist lifestyle and to the balance and direct relationship between man and nature. Thus, the leaders followed the holistic principle and organized both the tribals and non-tribals considering their heterogeneous interests. Consequently, the movement witnessed a non-class position like the Gandhian nationalist movement.⁹⁷ Therefore, loyalty towards the tribal people by the non-tribals was a part of social movement politics to fulfill the larger interest of the civil society organizations. Nodoubt, *Narmada Bachao Andolan* was a cohesive movement to protect the natural and social environment; it was a social resistance against the state directed developmental paradigm and the middle class intellectuals took the credit to concretize the movement but it cannot be denied that the tribals were the motive force to make the movement radical being Gandhian. With environmental protection issue, the Narmada movement leaders added the security concern and survival needs of the tribals; hence, reflected tribalism from anthropocentric viewpoint of the struggle.

Politics of Environmentalism and Tribalism: Tribal Resistance against POSCO and Tipaimukh Project

⁹⁵ Sangvai, Sanjay, 1995, "Reopening Sardar-Sarovar Issue: Significant Gain of Narmada Struggle" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 11, pp. 542-544.

⁹⁶ Swain, Ashok, 2010, *Struggle against the State: Social Network and Protest Mobilization in India*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd., England, p.48.

⁹⁷ Patkar, Medha (in conversation with Dunu Roy and Geeti Sen), 1992, "The Strength of a People's Movement" in Geeti Sen edited *Indigenous Vision: People of India, Attitudes to the Environment*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, pp. 284-285.

On 7th January, 2014, Ministry of Environment and Forests (*henceforth* MoEF), Government of India, revalidated the environmental clearance for the Integrated Iron and Steel Plant with Captive Power Plant at Jagatsinghpur district of Odisha by M/s POSCO India Private Limited. POSCO committed to develop green belt in 33% of the total area. Orissa Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation, Government of Orissa, also committed to hand over 2,700 acres of land to POSCO. The clearance clarified that the captive source of the iron ore linkage for the POSCO is M/s Khandadhar mine in Sundargarh district of Orissa. POSCO will make a long term agreement with Orissa Mining Corporation (OMC) and other private mine owner for the iron ore till the time captive mine is ready. When revalidating the environmental clearance, MoEF was concerned about the control of air, water and noise pollution. Emphasize was also given in the risk and disaster management, water stocking, coastal region management, waste management, public health, creation of green belt, time wise environmental monitoring etc.⁹⁸ It is to be noted that, all these issues of environmental clarity and purity was pronounced by the civil society organizations through the medium of social resistance. The state institutions paid little attention to the preservation of common property resources, livelihood security, the very survival of the local *adivasis* and other marginalized communities, whereas the civil society organizations of the environmental and human rights activists have raised these issues through social action against POSCO.⁹⁹ Mr. Abhay Sahoo, President of *POSCO Protirodh Sangram Samiti* (*hereafter* PPSS), was from middle class background and a CPI leader who organized a radical protest against POSCO mobilizing likely to be affected rural peasants and other marginalized people whose survival needs were *Jal-Jungle-Jameen* (water, forest and land) centric. However, POSCO supporters viewed that Mr. Sahoo was mobilizing the opposition party supporters to resist POSCO and his

⁹⁸ Letter on 'Integrated Iron & Steel Plant (4.0 MTPA) with Captive Power Plant (4×100 MW) of Kujang, Near Paradip, Jagatsinghpur in Odisha by M/s POSCO India Private Limited – regarding revalidation of Environmental Clearance' to M/s POSCO India Private Limited, Dated – 7th January, 2014 from Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, F. No. J-11011,/285/2007-IAII (I).

⁹⁹ *Updates from Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti*, March 1, 2013, available at <http://www.sanhati.com/5983/> accessed on 24th March, 2014.

actions were purely anti-developmental in character. It was also propagated that Mr. Sahoo's radical vow was politically discoloured.¹⁰⁰

PPSS raised a voice for the proper implementation of Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA) at the proposed site for POSCO. Since 2008, the implementation of FRA at the proposed site was not proper, anti-POSCO supporters claimed. POSCO controversy composed a dark history of the implementation of FRA at three village panchayats (Gadakuja, Nuagaon and Dhinkia) of Erasama block, the proposed site for POSCO.

- In March 2008, Gram Sabha of Dhinkia passed a resolution for electing a Forest Rights Committee to start the process of Granting forest rights mandated by FRA, 2006. Following the Section 5 of the Act, the committee also passed a resolution to protect the surrounding areas from environmental destruction. But the State Government of Odisha ignored the Gram Sabha and did not take any step to implement the Act.
- In August 2008, the Supreme Court of India permitted to use the forest land but directed the MoEF to proceed in 'accordance with law'.
- In August 2009, MoEF issued a circular stating that clearance for using forest land for non-forest use could not be given without proper certificates of the Gram Sabhas of the affected areas.
- On 19th December 2009, the District Collector of Jagatsinghpur district wrote a letter to the Block Development Officer (BDO) of Erasama block to get the approval of the Gram Sabhas of the area for the proposed diversion for POSCO. Later, MoEF, in violation of its own circular issued in August 2009, granted clearance for the POSCO project for diversion of forest land without any Gram Sabha resolution certifying that the FRA had been implemented or that the Gram Sabha had consented to the diversion. Writing a letter to MoEF, PPSS opposed the action.

¹⁰⁰ *Shramikshakti Newsletter*, December 2007, available at <http://sanhati.com/literature/booklets/> accessed on 30th September, 2014.

- In January 2010, MoEF clarified that the clearance of December 2009 was conditional and subject to the settlement of the rights. But that clearance was not withdrawn and notably, all the government officials treated it as final clearance.
- On 19th January 2010, the BDO of Erasama block wrote letters to the Sarpanches of Gadakujanga, Nuagaon and Dhinkia Gram Panchayats for giving opinion on the diversion of forest land.
- PPSS started a three month protest from February 2010. All the Gram Sabhas passed a resolution reasserting people's rights and powers under the FRA, 2006 while rejecting the proposed diversion. Meanwhile, the District Collector sent a letter to State Government of Odisha indicating that the settlement of rights under the FRA, 2006 in the disputed Gram Sabha had been done. The Collector also informed that there are no tribals or other traditional forest dwellers in the proposed area of POSCO.
- In July 2010, the State Government of Odisha took initiative for the acquisition of cultivable land in exchange of compensation. But it was reported that all the land donors were willing sellers but they were returning the disbursed cheques and others were committing suicide. Immediately the MoEF constituted a Committee consisting of four members chaired by Meena Gupta, former Environment Secretary at the Centre, to investigate the matters of 'relief and rehabilitation' and 'settlement of rights under the Forest Rights Act' in the proposed area.
- In August 2010, MoEF issued an order to stop work for POSCO. During this period, PPSS appealed to the MoEF for the withdrawal of controversial forest clearance given in December 2009 and protested against Meena Gupta Committee.
- On 18th October 2010, Meena Gupta Committee submitted its report. But a broad difference was measured between the report submitted by Meena Gupta, the Chairman, and the report submitted by the other three members.

Meena Gupta viewed that cancellation of clearance of December 2009 is not necessary but the project proposal must carry out comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). On the other hand, the other report recommended cancellation of the EIA and Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearances granted to POSCO. However, both the reports agreed that the mandate of FRA was not followed properly and the state government should take the necessary step regarding the proper implementation of FRA.¹⁰¹

- On 11th April, 2011, PPSS wrote to Mr. Jairam Ramesh, the then Minister of State for Environment and Forests, informing that the Gram Sabha resolutions of the villages of Dinkia and Gobindapur passed on 21st and 23rd February 2011, respectively, which state that the people of the area are eligible as other traditional forest dwellers that they enjoy both individual and community rights under the FRA and that they reject consent to the proposed diversion for the POSCO project. The Palli Sabha or the Gram Sabha also exercised their power under Rule 11 of the FRA to extend the deadline for receipt of claims. These resolutions are complied with all technical requirements and valid as Palli Sabha resolutions for the purpose of FRA in Odisha. PPSS also pointed out that these Gram Sabha resolutions are the evidences under the Ministry's order of 30th July 2009 and show that the order was never complied with, in contravention of Ministry's condition imposed on the final clearance of 29th December 2009.¹⁰²
- On 14th April 2011, Mr. Jairam Ramesh replied to PPSS and he made it clear that the forest clearance for the project complex was made conditional on getting a categorical assurance from the state government that at least one of the three conditions enshrined in the FRA, 2006. Mr. Jairam Ramesh stated that the Section 2(o) and Section 4(3) of the FRA, 2006 are not fulfilled in

¹⁰¹ Mithal, Vibhav and Ashutosh Gupta, 2011, "Forest Rights Act Violation at POSCO Site, Orissa and How to resolve such conflicts in Future" in *Journal of India Law and Society*, Vol. 2: Monsoon, pp. 247-251.

¹⁰² Letter from *POSCO Protirodh Sangram Samiti* to Ministry of State (I/C) for Environment and Forests of 11th April, 2011, available at www.forestrightsact.com/corporate-projects/item/downloads/78 accessed on 23rd September, 2014.

case of those claiming to be dependent on or cultivating land in the POSCO project area. Mr. Ramesh also clarified that there is no “other traditional forest dwellers” who has for at least three generations prior to the 13th day of December, 2005 and the mentioned Gram Sabha resolutions have to be disposed off by the appropriate authority in accordance with the FRA, 2006,

especially keeping in mind the provision of the Section 4(5) of the Act which states that “...no member of a forest dwelling Scheduled Tribe or other traditional forest dwellers shall be evicted or removed from the forest land under his occupation till the recognition and verification procedure is completed”. Mr. Ramesh assured that a final decision regarding forest clearance will be taken after receiving information from the state government about the compilation of the process of recognition and verification procedure by the appropriate authority for all the villages from where forest land is to be transferred for non-forestry purposes.¹⁰³

Ladapari Village in Sundergarh district of Odisha with the Khandadhar Falls



Source: <http://www.frontline.in/cover-story/licence-to-plunder/article5652108.ece>

Thus anti-POSCO movement became a movement for forest rights. Regarding the proper implementation of FRA at the project site, state and civil society conflict continued through constitutional or normative means. But the revalidation of the clearance given on 7th January, 2014 did not make any further

¹⁰³ Reply of Mr. Jairam Ramesh to PPSS of 14th April, 2011, available at www.moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/POSCO-update-14-4-11.pdf accessed on 23rd September, 2014.

clarification on the implementation of FRA. Clearance of January 2014 stated that a linkage will be made with the mining area of Khandadhar hills for sufficient supply of iron ore for the POSCO project. But it is pertinent to note that, the Khandadhar hill is rich in forest and water resources. Forest rich Khandadhar hill is the home of the *Paudi Bhuiyan* tribal community and also have spiritual and religious significance for them. There is a popular folklore that the Khandadhar was created by Arjuna of *Mahabharata* where it is mentioned that Arjuna is said to have created a stream by striking a large tree with an arrow when his wife Draupadi was thirsty. The *Dhar* or stream was created by *Khanda* or rupture of a stone. Due to this spiritual significance, the forest was protected from the mining right till 1966 when Orissa Mining Corporation got its first lease and initiated the spurt of mining.¹⁰⁴ The local people believe that, from the fear of the wrath of Goddess Kanteshwari who resides in a cave of Khandadhar forest, the *Paudi Bhuiyan* primitive tribal community inhabits in the forests and worship the Khandadhar forests and waters with reverence. But it is explored that the livelihood of this community is purely forest based. *Paudi Bhuiyans* practice *podu*, i. e. shifting cultivation at the small hillocks around the village. They cultivate paddy and other indigenous lentils and millets like *Mandiya*, *Kulath*, *Gangai*, *Rumha* etc. Apart from cultivation, they collect non-timber forest produce for self sustenance. For many years, the *Bhuiyans* have their legal titles of fixed land plots in their villages yet they practice *podu* at the Khandadhar hills which are closer to their villages. But the tension was that having mining license at the Khandadhar hills, POSCO would extract its sufficient amount of good quality of iron ore which would ultimately destroy the natural forest cover and evict the *Bhuiyans*.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Mining Zone People's Solidarity Group, 2010, *Iron and Steel: The POSCO-India Story*, 20th October, 2010, p. 57 available at www.forestrightsact.com/corporate-projects/item/download/57.pdf accessed on 28th September, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Manshi, Asher, 2009, *Striking While the Iron is Hot: A Case Study of the Pohang Steel Company's (POSCO) proposed Project in Orissa*, National Centre for Advocacy Studies, Pune, p. 16 available at https://stoposco.files.wordpress.com/2009/09/striking-while-the-iron-is-hot_posco-case-study.pdf accessed on 21st June, 2013.

Mining rights for the POSCO was intensifying the possibility of the alienation of tribals from the forest land of Khandadhar hills. Not only the tribals but also other lower caste people, who were professionally agricultural labourers, were frightened that they would lose their access to forests which provide firewood, fruits and some wild vegetables. A private land owner viewed that only a selected few people, who have huge land-holding, threatened the other people to sell their land for the project. Under the banner of PPSS, continuous struggle was going on to protect the forest based livelihood and cultivation. The majority of the core committee of

A Dongriya Kondh girl expresses Solidarity with the Anti-Posco Cause



Source: <http://www.kractivist.org/tag/posco/>

PPSS consists of the people who belong to Other Backward Castes (OBC) and few are from Scheduled Caste community.¹⁰⁶ During field survey, it was observed that a large number of private land owners, who have already received the compensation selling their land to state

government, were willing to organize protest movement demanding proper compensation and rehabilitation. Mysteriously, the leaders and also the movement participants have hardly influenced any tribal for such reactionary approach. In September, 2011, the then Deputy General Manager of POSCO-India of Kujang block showing a video clip stated that ‘the proposed area is uninhabited and no one is cultivating the land because the land is barren and most importantly no tribal community resides at the proposed site. The struggle of the tribals is a politics of resistance as well as a politics of anti-development.’

¹⁰⁶ Rupesh Kumar, 2013, “Caste, Class and Social Movements: A Case Study of the Anti-Posco Movement” in *Indian Journal of Dalit and Tribal Studies and Action*, Vol. I, Issue I, p. 15.

It is difficult to find out authentic evidences on separate tribal resistance against POSCO, though victimized tribal communities like *Paudi Bhuiyan* and *Juang* have been identified. But in case of the movement against Tipaimukh dam, the tribal communities like Hmars and Zeliangrong Nagas played a dominant role. Tipaimukh dam would have several negative impacts on the socio-cultural practice and livelihood system of the tribal people. Hence, the tribals became main participants of the social resistance against Tipaimukh project at the Tuivai river of Barak valley.

Barak and Tuivai rivers are considered as holy for the Hmars.

These rivers provide drinking water and satisfy various domestic needs. For the rice cultivation and horticulture, Hmars collect water from these rivers. Thus, the Hmars, a Kuki-Chin group, have an ancestral connection with these rivers and their spiritual and cultural lives revolve around the Barak and Tuivai. The proposed site for the

Tipaimukh project is also culturally significant area for the Zeliangrong Naga tribes. Not only

for the Hmars and Zeliangrong Nagas rather the Tipaimukh village is regarded as sacred and historical for the tribes such as Unau-Suipuis, the Hrangkhawls and Darlongs of Tripura; the Bietes of Meghalaya; the Sakecheps of Assam and the Komren of Manipur. According to folklore, different groups migrating from Southeast Asia and Central Asia settled themselves in *rounglevaisuo*, i. e Tipaimukh village, after conferring the guardianship of the place in the hands of Hmars. In the project site, there is a small river island called *Thiledam* which means death and life in Hmar. According to the Hmar mythology, this island is the first place where the

Tribal Resistance against Tipaimukh Dam



Source:

<http://incomindios.ch/en/?cat=bwiabysvbbbrcm&paged=7>

soul of a Hmar goes after a person dies. From this island, the soul move forward either to paradise or to hell or comes back to the earth to be reborn. Through intense social resistance to dam project, Hmars reiterated that their cultural and mythological traditions are at the brink of extinction due to the mega dam project.¹⁰⁷

It was apprehended that the Tipaimukh project would disrupt the processes of *jhum* cultivation and wet-rice cultivation which are the main sources of livelihood for the local tribals. Therefore, question of tribal security was acute in this respect. Under the banner of Committee Against Tipaimukh Dam (CATD) tribals started their resistance. Similarly, several Non-Governmental Organizations, professionals and the other persons belonging to different social strata, culture and ethnicity have actively joined the movement. Thus it became a multi-ethnic movement. The Action Committee against Tipaimukh Project (ACTIP) is an umbrella group of a number of organizations in Manipur that spearheaded the opposition. Civil society organizations like Hmar Students' Association (HAS), Sinlung Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Organization (SIPHRO), Centre for Organization Research and Education (CORE), Citizens concern for Dams and Development (CCDD), Zeliangrong Union (ZU), Naga Mothers Union, Manipur (NMUM), All Manipur United Club Organization (AMUCO), Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), United Naga Council (UNC), All Naga Students' Association, Manipur (ANSAM), Naga People Organization (NPO), Naga Women Union (NWW) etc. collectively and sometimes separately organized protest movements against Tipaimukh project.¹⁰⁸ Most of the local movement organizations were formed by the local tribals who actively took part in the movement for human security and environmental sustainability. However, it cannot be denied that the state of Manipur witnessed an identity movement again in the name of anti-dam movement. Indigenous activists once argued that, thousands of outsiders would come as workers and settle down in their restricted areas. Hence, the total demography will be

¹⁰⁷ Arora, Vibha and Ngamjahao Kipgen, 2012, "We can live without power, but we can't live without our land: Indigenous Hmar Oppose the Tipaimukh Dam in Manipur" in *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 61, No. 1, pp. 109-128.

¹⁰⁸ Hussain, Monirul, 2008, *ibid*, pp. 127-128; Arora, Vibha and Ngamjahao Kipgen, 2012, *ibid*, pp. 117, 121.

changed and the local *adivasis* will be denied access to their common property resources. Besides, the government is unable to provide satisfactory rehabilitation and resettlement package for the local people.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, sporadic cases of violence by the Hmars people against the initiative of dam construction were reported. At one point of time, the Hmars became violent to raise the identity question which is closely associated with local natural resources.

In case of Tipaimukh anti-dam movement, persons belonging to middle class social strata revealed their identity as intellectuals and came forward to clarify the objective of the movement, to develop the subaltern political consciousness and to direct the movement through non-violent means. Ramananda Wangkheirakpam, Director of Indigenous Perspectives (IP) and Centre for Organization, Research and Education (CORE), apprehended that the dam would cause massive displacement of the tribal people and drastic environmental change. Officially it has been displayed that the total area to be submerged is about 284 square kilometers, which includes 90 villages that are home to 1,310 tribal families and 27,242 hectares of forest and cultivable land and habitats of rare and endangered animals and reptiles like pythons, gibbons, leopards and deer. The place is rich in orchids, medicinal and herbal plants. Though these figures are highly debated, it is obvious that both India and Bangladesh would face environmental destruction if the dam is constructed. In 1995 and again in 1998, the Government of Manipur opposed the dam because of concerns about resettlement and rehabilitation, dam safety and environmental impact. Later, the same government authorized North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) to prepare a revised project report. In 2002, the Manipur State Cabinet Ministry permitted the process of dam construction. In the midst of this period, CCDD, a forum of about 45 organizations in Manipur, were demanding detailed information on the dam but the state government did not provide the relevant information. Noticeably, the NEEPCO was trying to bypass the MoEF. But after some delays in environmental impact assessment, a hearing took place on 2nd December, 2004 in Mizoram. The indigenous people of Mizoram refused to transfer

¹⁰⁹ Arora, Vibha and Ngamjahao Kipgen, 2012, *ibid*, p. 121.

land and water to NEEPCO for any kind of development. In another hearing, villagers demanded that the consent will be given if the project proponents fulfill few conditions. The conditions were: i) the new comers will have no power to overwhelm the local population culturally or by competing for jobs and resources in the region, ii) alternative livelihood arrangements should be provided for the villagers, iii) free power to be given to all affected villages and iv) a lump-sum of Rs. 5 lakh (less than US\$ 11,500) to be provided to each affected family. The protestors raised the questions that why the public hearing was held in Mizoram first and not in Manipur where 90% of the submergence zone lies.¹¹⁰ Aram Pamei, Secretary, Naga Women's Union, Manipur, was dreaded about the human rights violation in Manipur

**Local citizens gathered on March 14, 2013
International Day of Action for Rivers on the Barak
River in India to protest construction of the Tipaimukh**



Source:

<https://www.internationalrivers.org/blogs/257/experts-reject-flooding-forests-for-tipaimukh-and-dibang-dams>

Barak River, more than 67 villages will be deprived of their livelihood sources. She wrote that the Zeliangrong people live in the proposed area where they have developed a well knit web of community life and they have emotional attachment with the land of the mother earth which constitutes their cultural and psychological frame of mind. Simultaneously, the place is very rich in biodiversity. Exotic and rare flora and fauna and rich gene pool are available in the proposed land. After the

regarding the construction of dam on Ahu (Barak) river. Pamei wrote to the editor of *Economic and Political Weekly* being afraid of state-sponsored human rights abuse. Pamei expressed her sympathy for the tribal communities of the proposed area. She viewed that agriculture and horticulture are the main sources of livelihood for the local tribals. Therefore, with the construction of huge dam in

¹¹⁰ Wangkheirakpam, Ramananda, 2005, "India Playing with Fire with Tipaimukh Dam" in *World Rivers Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 12.

construction of dam both the natural and social environment will be destroyed. Therefore, public support is needed to stop construction of dams in Tipaimukh to respect social, economic, cultural, geological, environmental and ecological justice.¹¹¹

In case of anti-POSCO movement in Odisha, the middle class activists have shown a composite character of compassion for the tribals and marginalized communities controlling the trigger of the movement from the perspective of forest rights for the traditional communities. On the other hand, in the social resistance against Tipaimukh project over Tuivai River of Barak valley in the state of Manipur, the middle class activism took a radical shape for securing tribal culture that revolves around the land, water and forest resources in the project site. In anti-POSCO movement, the poor peasants and fishermen were the main participants of the movement that was controlled by middle class intellectuals, professionals and party leaders. On the contrary, the Tipaimukh anti-dam movement was basically a social resistance from the tribal solidarity groups; the middle class intellectuals and professionals supported the movement sometimes through constitutional means and sometimes from radical non-party line.

¹¹¹ Pamei, Aram, 2001, "Havoc of Tipaimukh Dam High Dam Project" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 13, pp. 1054, 1148.