

Developmental Policy and Social Unrest in Jharkhand: An Anthropological Analysis

Ambrish Gautam*

Amity University Jharkhand, Ranchi, India

ABSTRACT

British colonial state transformed the forest dependent swidden agriculturist indigenous people into settled plough agriculturist communities. Colonial agrarian policy was guided by the two agrarian acts, the CNTA and SPTA. In the first phase emphasis was given on setting up of large-scale industries and promotion of extractive industries to feed them. For power generation hydro-electric was a new addition to the existing thermal ones. Agriculture was pushed down to the second grade on the scale of preference. Nothing was done to expand irrigated fields and agriculture was left to the vagaries of rains. The waters of the Multipurpose Hydro-Electric projects, such as Damodar Valley Corporation and Subarnareka Multipurpose Project, flew to the neighboring states of West Bengal and Odisha leaving the land of their origin high and dry. Rainfed agriculture accompanied by hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizers and pesticides continuously ruined the soil and low productivity coupled with intermittent drought conditions increased the food insecurity of the people. In the next phase, post 90's economic reform period, more and more agricultural and forest land was diverted for non-forestry purposes to meet the corporate demand for investment in industry. Agriculture by the small farmers found no place in the policy of "Development" of the post Reform period. Jharkhand was formed with the objective of furthering this 'Development' agenda. Let us have a cursory look at these phases of policy change. In this paper I had tried to analyze the developmental prospects and its impact in Jharkhand.

Keywords: CNTA; SPTA; Damodar valley corporation; Subarnareka multipurpose project; Bombay plan; Heavy engineering corporation; Bokaro steel plant; Displacement koel-karo multipurpose project; NBA

POST-INDEPENDENCE POLICY FRAMEWORK

As soon as the collapse of the British colonial rule in India appeared to be imminent after the 2nd World War the capitalists of the country became apprehensive of the possibility of the communists and socialists to capture political power and abolish private property. The Zamindars feared the growing peasant movements demanding land reform. The internal colonialists were threatened by the growth of tribal autonomy movements in the country. The bureaucrats and the police, responsible for unleashing a reign of terror on the people of India at the behest of their colonial masters, were shaken to realize that their days were numbered.

The peasants, the workers, the Dalits and the Adivasis started dreaming liberation from the age-old bondage and injustice. Some preferred to wear 'Gandhi Topi', while others held red flag. Gandhi stood for the emancipation of the rural India and the communists and socialists wanted to establish socialism in the country.

The course of events in the following years after independence provided a sigh of relief to the former and spelled a chain of disappointments to the latter! The universal franchise provided political power to the people, but it was without the economic stamina. It very soon turned out to be the husk without a grain. The real power remained with the same people who enjoyed it under the British. The independence provided them the opportunity to expand the economic strength and political power at the cost of the people who struggled for the freedom of the country. The tribal India was specifically targeted to achieve this goal.

The proposals, commonly known as the Bombay Plan, for the post-independence economy of India were drafted much before the independence and were published in 1944-45. The signatories of the Plan were, Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoi Tata, Ghanshyam Das Birla, Ardeshir Dalal, Sri Ram, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Ardeshir Darabshaw Shroff, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas and John Mathai. The Bombay Plan virtually shaped the economic policy of the country; the state should invest the public money to construct

*Correspondence to: Ambrish Gautam, Assistant Professor, Amity University Jharkhand, Ranchi, India, Email: amb_admn05@yahoo.co.in

Received: January 21, 2020; Accepted: February 3, 2020; Published: February 10, 2020

Citation: Gautam A (2020) Developmental Policy and Social Unrest in Jharkhand: An Anthropological Analysis. Anthropology 8:210. doi:10.35248/2332-0915.20.8.210

Copyright: ©2020 Gautam A. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

heavy industry, especially steel plants, to benefit the private sector in the long run, and the private companies should be given protection from the competition in the market with the foreign companies so that they could sell their low quality products and earn high degree of profit from a captive market. Industry needed land, the forests above it and the minerals beneath it!

It was believed that India took the path of socialism through the Bombay Plan because it suggested the construction of big industries by the government. It was obviously a misnomer. Socialization of Indian economy was not, and could never be, the agenda of the Bombay plan. The first two Indian Five-year Plans were the direct outcome of the Bombay Plan clothed as the copy of the Five-Year Plan of the Soviet Russia of the 20s. The people of India were given an impression that India was taking a socialist path of development by Nehru and his favored economist P. C. Mahalanabish. But, unlike the Soviet Union private enterprises could amass private property. This was called the 'mixed economy'.

Heavy Engineering Corporation in Ranchi and Bokaro Steel Plant in Dhanbad emerged out of this planning. The Indian capitalists did not invest a single farthing but kept reaping the benefits in terms of cheap steel and machine tools for their industries in the following years. The real contributors were the people of Jharkhand. They provided the land and minerals and the cheap labour. The minerals were free, and the land was taken either at a throw away price or even without it and the labour was made available by deliberately destroying the traditional means of livelihood of the people. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the Heavy Engineering Corporation on the 15th November 1963 in Ranchi. In both the cases the socialist Russians provided the technology, the capitalist Indians prepared the planning and the Government of India provided the money and they together dug the grave for the indigenous people of Jharkhand.

Around the same time big dams were constructed over the holy river Damuda (Damodar) by submerging large numbers of villages and displacing thousands of people without proper compensation and rehabilitation. Electricity was required to turn the wheels of the industries.

The Tatas were the cleverest of all the signatories of the Bombay Plan. They got the promulgation of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act delayed for long four years to grab the tribal land on a large scale in Singhbhum and used the ill-gotten money that their ancestors accumulated by acting as the agent of selling opium to China by the British for the construction of the Tata Steel. Today the company claims, "The Swadeshi Movement encouraged Jamsetji Tata to set up Asia's first ever privately-owned integrated iron and steel plant" (Tata Steel, Annual Report 102nd P.28). Once in the Pragati Maidan in New Delhi they put up a huge billboard on an industrial exhibition. It depicted the picture of dancing Adivasi girls of Jharkhand and at the corner there was a caption in small letters that read, 'We also make steel!' As if celebration of tribal culture was their main objective! Behind the false face of patriotism and paternalism hides the monster that reared its head in ruthless acquisition of tribal land, in Gua firing in 1980, in killing the trade union leaders in the past and in continuing the land grab march in the present. The Kalinga Nagar massacre is the glaring one.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru termed these gigantic public and private sector industries and dams as the 'modern temples of India'. These modern temples were built on the ancient 'Sarnas' (the place of propitiation of nature and ancestral spirits) of the Adivasis!

After independence the Indian ruling elite under caste-class combine, having satisfied with its hunger of power, engaged itself in satiating its thirst of wealth. 'National interest' was the 'log in name' and 'Development' became the 'password' to have a smooth access to the natural resources of the country for their inhuman exploitation and criminal expropriation [1]. Public servants, police and politicians formed a nexus to this end. Where colonialism left off, development took over [2]. World of artifacts devastated the natural world. While Dams and mines displaced millions of peasants and tribals, destruction of forests caused hunger and destitution. The swelling multitude of 'ecological refugees' [3], who constitute about one third of Indian population, were turned into sweat labourers and treated as the dirt of development. In Jharkhand alone 15 lakhs people have been displaced, So far and 15 lakh acres of their ancestral land have been alienated from them. Development in Jharkhand has been taking place under the threat of guns. Behind the repression that accompanies development lies a perception of the Adivasi peasantry as physical obstacles in the drive to gain full access to land, raw materials and natural resources [4]. The ideology of development has turned the habitats of the adivasis all over the country into 'internal colonies' [5].

JHARKHAND STATE AND DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

Most of the activists and sympathizers of Jharkhand separate state movement believe that while the objective of the movement was to de-colonize the tribal habitat of the pre-British Jharkhand, the state of Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar with the goal of fulfilling the demand of 'Development' of the nation at the cost of continuing 'internal colonial situation' in Jharkhand. With the passage of last 17 years since the formation of the state in 2000 the meaning of 'Development' has gradually surfaced with all its dimensions before the people of the state.

Public opinion on the issue of 'Development' in Jharkhand is fairly divided. As we have noticed that the issue emerged with the large-scale opencast mining operations, construction of big reservoirs for hydroelectric power generation and gigantic iron and steel and heavy industries in the early years after independence. The issue continued to torment the indigenous peoples in the following years; as such activities kept increasing leading to large-scale dispossession of land, displacement and outmigration.

The state and the elite society, including in-migrating outsiders of middle and trading classes, stand firmly for 'Development' that requires natural resources. The owners of the natural resources, especially the proprietors of land (the cultivating communities), oppose 'Development' with collective determination. The opposition costs life and property on the face of an aggressive state. Killings and imprisonment of the people who oppose displacement has been a regular affair of the statecraft.

The protagonists of the peoples' movement against displacement repeatedly say that they are not against change in the economic condition of the state. They also aspire for better livelihood and wellbeing. What they oppose is the generation of wealth for the rich at the cost of the poor. If 'Development' means 'Destruction' then they have right to oppose such development. The popular opposition to the Koel-Karo Multipurpose Project brings the point home. "bijli bati kabua, dibri bati abua", we do not want electricity, we are happy with our kerosene lamp, was the slogan that they raised while opposing the project that was about to displace more than hundred villages.

Every society aspires for change, but all changes are not welcomed. If the change does not take the community to a higher level of well-being and leads to deprivation, there will naturally be an opposition to such change. 'Development' is a form of change, basically economic. It is preached that a growth in economy of the country will eventually benefit every citizen and not just the rich. However, nobody living in the lower ladder of the economic benefit would prefer to wait when his or her share of well-being would 'trickle down'. This is especially so if the person asked to sacrifice his present livelihood resources and forced to live a lower level of livelihood for the sake of 'Development'.

This debate on 'Development' leads to two positions. One, a form of 'Development' that would initiate the economic change from the lowest ladder of social ranking, which is termed as 'Development from Bellow'. The other view rejects 'Development' as a form of inclusive change and thinks in terms of an 'Alternative to Development' for the well-being of the poor and the deprived and eventually the same of all the citizens. This discourse on 'Development' needs to be understood with a bit of elaboration.

DEVELOPMENT DEBATE

The ideology of development is so overarching today that nobody can escape from its grip. Several softer notions have been tried to make devastating impact of development bearable, namely, development from bellow, participatory development, development as freedom, and even alternative development! The very development of the ideology of development needs some elaborations.

"In common parlance, development describes a process through which the potentialities of an object or organism are released, until it reaches its natural, complete, full-fledged form. Hence the metaphoric use of the term to explain the natural growth of plants and animals" [6]. Let us take the example of mango. The outcome of the development of the seed of mango to a ripe fruit is a process that leads first to the germination of the seed, then the growth of the mango tree and finally the flowering and bearing of the fruits.

In other words, "Development is a process of self-motion from the lower (simple) to the higher (complex)...the transition from the lower to the higher takes place because the tendency to the higher is contained in the lower in a concealed form" [7]. Therefore, "Development refers to that process of change in which something becomes more and more concrete and mature, as opposed to the simple succession of one thing passing away as another comes into being or transforms into something else..." (<http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/d/e.htm#development>). The seed of mango will eventually develop into mango tree and bear mango fruit, it cannot be expected to develop into a tamarind tree and bear tamarind fruit. If one wants to have tamarind in the same garden, he will have to first uproot all the mango saplings and replace them with tamarind saplings.

Capitalism led by the west, especially the United States of America after the World War second, changed radically the meaning of 'development' in the context of human civilization. Industrial civilization, as it has developed in the Western European countries and the US is considered to be the highest form of human civilization and therefore, those societies who achieved it are the developed ones and the rest of the world and peoples are underdeveloped. The 'underdeveloped' people should become 'developed' by adopting the economic and political systems of the industrial civilization. This notion undermines two facts; one is that industrial civilization is not the ultimate form of the development

of human society and the other is that every people has the right to grow according to its own genius and volition. What is best can only be judged by its sustainability and acceptability by the majority. Thus, the scheme to impose the industrial civilization on others cannot help them to develop according to their own genius but by its brutal violation. To say that every society is destined to develop into an industrial society is wrong and motivated by vested interests of capitalism. It is as absurd as saying that every plant will eventually develop into the tamarind plant and bear only tamarind fruit! The hidden agenda is to forcibly replace all the various plants by the tamarind plant! This notion of development has therefore been aptly called the 'development terrorism' [8].

In this scheme of things the West considers India to be 'underdeveloped' and the India considers its internal colonies are 'underdeveloped' and in the internal colonies like Jharkhand adivasis are considered to be sitting at the lowest rung of the ladder of development. They are to be developed! And they can only be developed by joining the march of development led by the ruling classes.

But this scheme has been proved to be self-defeating. "The unprecedented high economic growth on which privileged India prides itself is a measure of the high speed at which India of privileged is distancing itself from the India of crushing poverty. The higher the rate of economic growth along this pattern becomes, the greater would be the underdevelopment of India..." [8].

India has leaped forward from the era of mixed economy of the past to the free market economy of the present. The present is the natural outcome of the past. Now the state does not construct steel industries, it does the mining, because that is what the private sector industries need to maximize their profit. The state assists them most in terms of making the resources available to them and brutally suppressing any popular opposition to this predation by the owners of the resources.

Jharkhand has been the largest producer of ecological refugees. Increasingly more and more people have been being displaced under the development projects; 90% of them are the Adivasis. Ecological devastation has completely broken the chain of food security. According to the official estimate 10% people of Jharkhand today suffer from hunger frequently and 2% suffer from chronic hunger. Adivasis are living a life, which is as bad as the people of the world's most poverty stricken countries of sub Saharan Africa [9].

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Those who believe in the efficacy of 'Development' in removing poverty expect that it should lead a community or individual to a higher level of well-being. If a development model fails to register any progress towards this goal then an alternative of that model is to be sought without however, questioning the ideology of 'Development' as such.

It is observed, "India's national income is growing at around 8% per annum, but there are sections of the population whose income is not growing at that rate. For instance, the incomes of the bottom 10% (as per the National Sample Survey) have not been falling or even stagnating; rather they have been growing at about 2% per annum over the last decade or so...Does such growing inequality amount to deprivation for the poorest sections?" [10]. the discussion on well-being and deprivation is cast in terms of the discourse on exclusion. "Exclusions are of two forms. One is

exclusion from access to or denial of rights to various services, such as health, education, housing, and water, with sanitation also being more recently included as an essential service. The other form of exclusion is that of deprivation of the right to express one's views, of representation and voice..." "Adivasis are excluded for provision of services, but they are not excluded for extraction of minerals, or use of their water resources for electricity generation and irrigation; they are not excluded for recruitment of unskilled labourers...In this process the adivasis have been displaced and subjected to 'adverse incorporation' as the lowest rung of the urban working class, of the urban poor. Adverse incorporation (or adverse inclusion) is the condition of incorporation where the workers are marginalized and thus trapped in conditions of poverty. The movement is from exclusion to adverse incorporation". The authors finally argued that at least in theory there is a possibility of having a form of incorporation which is not adverse. "With provisions of infrastructure and essential services, education and health in particular, and with security of tenure in their land and other productive resources, such as common forests, there is no reason why there should not be a process of inclusion that is also developmental, in the sense that the outcome of inclusion is a superior state of well-being".

Amartya Sen and Jean Drez consider the issue of economic development is to be seen in the larger context of the demand of democracy and social justice. They believe that development is best seen in terms of an expansion of people's basic freedoms, or human capabilities. In their words,

"In this perspective we have to recognize the importance of the two-way relationship between economic growth and the expansion of human capability, while also keeping in mind the basic understanding that the expansion of human freedom and capabilities is the goal for which the growth of GDP, among other factors, serves as important means. Growth generates resources with which public and private efforts can be systematically mobilized to expand education, healthcare nutrition, social facilities and other essentials of fuller and freer human life for all. And the expansion of human capability, in turn allows a faster expansion of resources and production, on which economic growth ultimately depends... Those who dream about India becoming an economic superpower... have to consider not only the reach of their understanding of the mutual relationship between growth and development, but also their appreciation of the demands of social justice, which is integrally linked with the expansion of human freedom." [11].

The authors also points out the role of the agency of women and equitable distribution of (political) power. Thus the views spelt out above by Nathan, Xaxa, Sen and Dreze talk about a form of development that accepts certain inalienable factors, namely, land and property rights (right to livelihood resources), people's active participation in making policies (democracy), human capabilities (like health and education) and social justice.

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In recent years a few powerful social movements registered their presence in the country, namely, CHIPKO, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Niyamgiri Bachao Andolan, Koel-Karo anti Dam Movement, Singur and Nanadigram movenets and Anti-POSKO movement. All these movements opposed the present development model of the government. They present quite a different view of development.

NBA has a clear vision of an alternative development paradigm of a democratic eco-socialistic economy with decentralized planning. It stands for participatory decision-making. It focuses more on rural area-based small-scale industrialization where there would be a need-based production by masses, not greed-based 'mass production' as in capitalism. Chipko movement has raised almost the same issues; it stands for Gandhian approach to development. It stands for an economy with decentralized planning and dispersed power of decision-making. It demanded agro- and forest produce based industry, and replacement of the Forest department with cooperatives of local people, village councils and forest councils [12]. Niyamgiri Movement raised the issue of tribal rights over livelihood resources and indigenous culture and strongly opposed mining of their livelihood providing sacred hill. As alternative to the dominant development model of the Government of Odisha it pointed out the importance of the sustainable way of life in symbiosis with nature. Koel-Karo anti-displacement agitation in Jharkhand raised the issue of tribe's cultural relationship with land and river. The leaders clearly stated that they do not want the development that displaces people and destruct their livelihood. Singur-Nandigram anti-displacement movement that caused the fall of left wing government in West Bengal strongly condemned the development policy of the government. The POSCO Pratirod Sangram Samity fought for agriculture against the drive of the government to replace it with industry. All these movements succeeded in stalling fully or partially the attempt to displace people from their traditional agriculture and forest based livelihood. Not necessarily all of them had an alternative development model in mind but one thing they had in common was that they challenged the present model of development.

RECENT LAND AND FOREST RIGHTS MOVEMENTS IN JHARKHAND

Prof. B. K. Roy Burman once stated in a meeting in Ranchi that what comes out of the state process is often disregarded by the state mechanism. He was referring to the violation of the protective land laws of Jharkhand (in those days Bihar) by the bureaucracy and dominant elites armed with the state policy of industrialization of country. Despite the fact of economic reform and structural economic change were already adopted by the state in the early 90s the state process continued to respond positively to the demand of the people for their rights to forest, right to land and right to participation in decision making. The legislative wing of the state passed three radical legislations in a row. They are, as follows.

1. 73rd and 74th Amendment of the Constitution 1992
2. Provision of Panchyat Extension in Scheduled Areas Act 1996
3. Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Forest Rights) Act 2006 and Amended Rules 2012
4. The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (also Land Acquisition Act, 2013) framed to replace the draconian colonial Land Acquisition Act of 1894

The foregoing analysis of tribal rights in Jharkhand throws up a mixed picture with respect to the status of tribal rights in Jharkhand. As far as the question of autonomy and recognition of the tribal identity is concerned, the creation of the State of Jharkhand is a positive step. The principle of tribal political autonomy has been accepted, and along with Constitutional provisions concerning socio-cultural rights, there is little formal threat to tribal rights.

In such a situation, the possibility of the tribal population exercising their rights appears bleak. However, what is positive is the intense and vigorous public debate that has emerged in various aspects of tribal rights. This indicates a degree of democratic contestation, which can only strengthen tribal rights in Jharkhand.

REFERENCES

1. https://www.equitabletourism.org/files/fileDocuments493_uid10.pdf
2. Jewitt S. Europe's 'others'? Forestry policy and practices in colonial and postcolonial India. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 1995;13(1):67-90.
3. Gadgil M, Guha R. *The Use and Abuse of Nature* (Omnibus Edition, containing *This Fissured Land* and *Ecology and Equity* ed.). 2000.
4. Devalle Susan BC. *Discourses of Ethnicity: Culture and Protest in Jharkhand*. Sage, New Delhi, 1992.
5. Padel F. *The sacrifice of human being: British rule and the Konds of Orissa*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1995.
6. Esteva Gustav, Sachs W, *Development dictionary, The: A guide to knowledge as power*. Orient Blackswan, 1997.
7. Rosenthal M, Yudin P. *A Dictionary of Philosophy*. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1967.
8. <https://www.epw.in/journal/2007/07/commentary/development-or-developmental-terrorism.html>
9. Sarkar S, Mishra S, Dayal H, Nathan D. Development and deprivation of Scheduled Tribes. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2006;18:4824-7.
10. Nathan D, Xaxa V. *Social exclusion and adverse inclusion: Development and deprivation of Adivasis in India*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
11. Dreze J, Sen A. *An Uncertain Glory: India and its Contradictions*. Penguin Books, London, 2014.
12. Sharma S. *Why People Protest: An Analysis of Ecological Movements*. Publication Divisions, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 2009.