

1 **POLICY PAPER**

2 **INEQUALITY, INJUSTICE AND INDIA'S FORGOTTEN PEOPLE**

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4
5 **ABSTRACT**

6 The Boston Consulting Group's 15th annual report, '*Winning the Growth Game: Global Wealth*
7 *2015*', has received extensive coverage in the Indian media. The report comes on top of the
8 Global Wealth Databook 2014 from Credit Suisse, which provides a much more accurate and
9 comprehensive picture of the trends in global inequality. There is no doubt that poverty has
10 declined significantly in recent times in India. But can we say the same about inequality? Official
11 data on all indicators of development reveal that India's tribal people are the worst off in terms
12 of income, health, education, nutrition, infrastructure and governance. They have also been
13 unfortunately at the receiving end of the injustices of the development process itself. Around 40
14 per cent of the 60 million people displaced following development projects in India are tribals,
15 which is not a surprise given that 90 per cent of our coal and more than 50 per cent of most
16 minerals and dam sites are mainly in tribal regions. Indeed, contrary to what economic theory
17 teaches, we find that many developed districts paradoxically include pockets of intense
18 backwardness. This paper argues that, the tribal people have not been included in or given the
19 opportunity to benefit from development. This paper discusses the forest-poverty relationship
20 and process of marginalization of tribal in developmental process.

21
22 **Key words**

23 Forest, Poverty, Tribal, development, displacement, marginalization
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27 **1. INTRODUCTION**

28 The Global Wealth Databook reveals some startling facts. The richest 1 per cent of Indians today
29 own nearly half (49 per cent) of India's personal wealth (The Hindu, 23rd September, 2017). The
30 rest of us 99 per cent are left to share the remainder among ourselves (The Hindu, 23rd
31 September, 2017). And that too is very unequally shared. The top 10 per cent Indians own nearly
32 three-quarters (74 per cent) of the country's personal wealth. The remaining 90 per cent share a
33 meagre quarter (The Hindu, 23rd September, 2017). At the other end of the spectrum, of the
34 world's poorest 20 per cent people, nearly one in four are Indians. Just to show by contrast,
35 China's share is a mere 3 per cent (The Hindu, 23rd September, 2017).

36 One view of India's inequality is that this is nothing to be worried about. This is the normal
37 progression of economic development. A set of expanding industries located in an urban area
38 induces further development of economic activity throughout its zone of influence. For some
39 years, this generates increasingly large differentials in income and development, but after
40 reaching a maximum level, inequality begins to decline, in the manner of an inverted 'U', what
41 economists call the Kuznets Curve (The Hindu, 14th August, 2016). In U.S President John F.
42 Kennedy's memorable phrase, "a rising tide lifts all boats".

43 A paper in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, (Sanchita Bakshi *et al* : "Regional Disparities in
44 India: A Moving Frontier", January 3, 2015) reveals that if we want to get an accurate picture of
45 regional inequalities, a well-recognised element of India's growth experience, we have to look
46 much deeper than just States or even districts (Bakshi et al., 2016). We need to go to the
47 subdistrict or block level. And there we find that an overwhelming share of the most backward
48 subdistricts has a high concentration of tribal population.

49 There is no doubt that poverty has declined significantly in recent times in India. But can we say
50 the same about inequality? Official data on all indicators of development reveal that India's tribal
51 people are the worst off in terms of income, health, education, nutrition, infrastructure and
52 governance (Bakshi et al., 2016). They have also been unfortunately at the receiving end of the
53 injustices of the development process itself. Around 40 per cent of the 60 million people
54 displaced following development projects in India are tribals, which is not a surprise given that
55 90 per cent of our coal and more than 50 per cent of most minerals and dam sites are mainly in
56 tribal regions (The Hindu, 14th August, 2016).

57 Indeed, contrary to what economic theory teaches, we find that many developed districts
58 paradoxically include pockets of intense backwardness (Nair 2004; Roy 2013; Chowdhury,
59 2014). Bakshi *et al* show that many districts include the most backward and most developed sub
60 districts of India; 92 districts have sub districts that figure in the list of both the top 20 per cent
61 and bottom 20 per cent of India's sub districts (Bakshi et al., 2016; The Hindu, 14th August,
62 2016). To give a few examples, "developed" districts like Thane, Vadodara, Ranchi,
63 Visakhapatnam and Raipur have some of the most backward sub districts (The Hindu, 23rd
64 September, 2017). In Korba and Raigarh districts of Chhattisgarh, Valsad of Gujarat, Pashchimi
65 Singhbhum and Purbi Singhbhum of Jharkhand, Kendujhar, Koraput and Mayurbhanj of Odisha,
66 the most industrialized sub districts are flanked by the most underdeveloped sub districts (Roy
67 2013). And invariably these backward sub districts are overwhelmingly tribal. Clearly, the tribal
68 people have not been included in or given the opportunity to benefit from development (Nair
69 2004; Choudhary 2014).

70 Inequality is important not only because of the acute perception of injustice it creates. Even
71 economists at the traditionally free-market fundamentalist International Monetary Fund, Andrew
72 G. Berg and Jonathan D. Ostry, have recently argued that "inequality can also be destructive to
73 growth by amplifying the risk of crisis or making it difficult for the poor to invest in education"
74 (The Hindu, 23rd September, 2017). They conclude: "reduced inequality and sustained growth
75 may thus be two sides of the same coin" (The Hindu, 23rd September, 2017).

76

77 **2. FOREST-POVERTY RELATIONSHIP**

78 There is a close relationship between forests and poverty (Duraiappah 1996, 1998; Rai & Soni
79 2019; Rai 2019a, 2019b). Approximately one fourth of the world's poor and 90% of the poorest
80 rely significantly on forests for their livelihoods (World Bank 2005; Surayya 2005). Forest
81 biodiversity, via NTFPs, plays an important role in affecting poverty issues for marginalized,
82 forest-dependent communities (Duraiappah 1996, 1998; DFID 1999). NTFPs contribute to
83 livelihood outcomes, including food security, health and well being, and income (Falconer,
84 1996). In many parts of the world these resources are critical for the socially most marginalized

85 people, who are the main actors in NTFP extraction and may provide them with the only source
86 of personal income (Ros-Tonen, 1999).

87 India's current forest and tree cover is estimated to be 78.29 million ha, constituting 23.81 per
88 cent of the geographical area of the country (ISFR, 2011). Forest cover alone amounts to 69.20
89 million ha, against the recorded forest area of 76.95 million ha. Of the total forest cover, 12.06
90 per cent is very dense forest (more than 70% crown density), 46.35 per cent is moderately dense
91 forest (40% to 70% crown density), and the remaining 41.59 per cent is open forest (10% to 40%
92 crown density). As per the India State of the Forest Report (ISFR) 2011, forest cover has
93 declined by 367 sq. km compared to the forest cover in the preceding ISFR in 2009. Tree cover
94 outside forest areas is assessed to be 9.7 million ha, and is experiencing an increase over the last
95 few assessments, indicating a rise in green cover in non-forest land in the country. Forest cover
96 in the country has more or less stabilized since the 1980s (MoE & F 1999; 2006; 2009) As per
97 the estimates of the Forest Survey of India, forest cover has increased marginally from 64.08
98 million ha in 1987 to 96.2 million ha in 2011 (ISFR 2011). The enactment of proactive forest
99 conservation policies and changes in management approaches from 'timber' to 'forest
100 ecosystem' during the last few decades have curbed deforestation, and promoted conservation
101 and sustainable management of forest (Rai & Soni 2019; Rai 2019a, 2019b). The enforcement of
102 The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 enabled the regulation of widespread diversions of forestland
103 for non-forest uses, and hence put a check on deforestation (Rai 2019a). The changing priorities
104 of the forest department from revenue generation to conservation-oriented forestry and the
105 practice of doing away with clear felling of tress has resulted in a significant decline of formal
106 pressure of deforestation and degradation on forest ecosystem (Rai 2019b). However, forest
107 degradation of natural forest due to several factors remains a major concern of forest
108 management (Rai 2019a; Rai 2019b; Rai 2019c).

109 India has a huge population living close to the forest with their livelihoods critically linked to the
110 forest ecosystem (Rai 2019a). There are around 1.73 lakh villages located in and around forests
111 (MoEF, 2006, 2009). Though there is no official census figures for the forest dependent
112 population in the country, different estimates put the figures from 275 million (World Bank,
113 2006) to 350400 million (MoEF, 2009). People living in these forest fringe villages depend upon
114 forest for a variety of goods and services (Rai 2019a). These includes collection of edible fruits,

115 flowers, tubers, roots and leaves for food and medicines; firewood for cooking (some also sale in
116 the market); materials for agricultural implements, house construction and fencing; fodder (grass
117 and leave) for livestock and grazing of livestock in forest; and collection of a range of
118 marketable non-timber forest products (Rai 2019a). Therefore, with such a huge population and
119 extensive dependence pattern, any over exploitation and unsustainable harvest practice can
120 potentially degrade forest (Rai 2019b).

121 Moreover, a significant percentage of the country's underprivileged population happened to be
122 living in its forested regions (Saha and Sundriyal, 2012). It has been estimated that more than 40
123 per cent of the poor of the country are living in these forest fringe villages (MoEF, 2006). Apart
124 from this, a significant percentage of India's tribal population lives in these regions. The forest
125 fringe communities not just collect these forest products for their own consumption but also for
126 commercial sale, which fetch them some income. The income from sale of the forest products for
127 households living in and around forest constitutes 40 to 60 per cent of their total income
128 (Bhattacharya , 2008; Bhattraai and Chraucher 1996; Bista and Edward 2006; Campbell 1988;
129 Campbell and Tewari 1995). A study (Saha and Sundriyal, 2012) on the extent of NTFP use in
130 north east India suggest that the tribal communities use 343 NTFPs for diverse purposes like
131 medicinal (163 species), edible fruits (75 species) and vegetables (65 species). The dependence
132 for firewood and house construction material is 100 and NTFPs contributed 19–32% of total
133 household income for the communities under study (Saha and Sundriyal, 2012).

134 Forests are not only a source of subsistence income for millions of poor households but also
135 provide employment to poor in these hinterlands (Rai 2019b). This makes forests an important
136 contributor to the rural economy in the forested landscapes in the country (Rai & Soni 2019; Rai
137 2019a, 2019b). The widespread poverty and lack of other income generating opportunities often
138 make these people resort to over-exploitation of forest resources (Angelson and Wunder 2003;
139 Rai 2019b). The collection of firewood for sale in the market, though it is illegal, is also
140 extensive in many parts of the forested regions in the country and constitutes the source of
141 livelihood for 11 per cent of the population (IPCC, 2007). However, many other forest products
142 have been sustainably harvested by local communities for many years, and are a constant source
143 of household income (Rai 2019b). Agriculture and livestock are two other major sources of
144 livelihoods in the forest fringe villages, which in turn depend extensively on the forest for

145 various inputs (Rai 2019a). People rear both bovine and ruminant livestock and forests and other
146 local common land are the major source of grass and tree fodder (Rai 2019b). Open grazing in
147 the forest is the conventional rearing practices for forest fringe communities and this has adverse
148 impact on growing stock as well as regeneration capacity of forest when there is over grazing
149 due to more livestock. ICFRE (2001) estimates suggest that India's forest support 270 million
150 cattle for grazing against its carrying capacity of 30 million. The incidence of grazing is
151 estimated to be affecting 78 per cent of the India's forests of which 18 per cent are highly
152 affected with remaining 31 per cent and 29 per cent medium and low respectively (World bank
153 2006; MoEF, 2006). The large livestock population also results in huge collection of tree fodder,
154 which affects the forest quality adversely. The annual requirement of dry and green fodder is
155 estimated to be 569 MT and 1025 MT respectively against the availability of 385 MT and 356
156 MT (Roy and Singh, 2008). This explains the pressure on India's forest from livestock sector
157 and its contribution to the state of degradation of forests in human dominated landscapes of the
158 country.

159 Agricultural systems in the forested regions also inextricably related to the forest ecosystem.
160 Farmers collect small timber, poles, and other materials from forest for agricultural implements
161 and fencing the agricultural fields, leaf litter for manure, herbs, and medicinal plants to deal with
162 pests and so on. The agriculture in India is predominantly subsistence and crop production highly
163 vulnerable weather conditions and wildlife attack. Shifting cultivation that is still being practiced
164 in some regions of the country contributes to the forest degradation. With increased crop cycles
165 and declining fallow period in shifting cultivation practices in recent decades the impact of
166 traditional agricultural practice is more severe. Different estimates for area under shifting
167 cultivation ranges from 5 million ha to 11.6 million ha involving 3 to 26 million people in 16
168 different states in the country (MoEF, 2006). The practice is more prominent in northeastern
169 states.

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171 **3. INDIAN FORESTS, RURAL POOR AND TRIBAL SOCIETY**

172 As we have already discussed in previous paragraphs, India has the largest number of poor in the
173 world, many of whom depend directly or indirectly on forests for a living (Bahuguna V K. 2000;

174 Bharath et al., 2011). Poverty, as well as large and expanding human and livestock populations,
175 puts unrelenting pressure on the forests of India (Bharath et al., 2011). The consequence is severe
176 degradation of the country's forest resources (Bharath et al., 2011).

177 India's agricultural intensification has had a major positive impact, relieving pressure on
178 marginal lands on which most of the forests remain. But urbanization, industrialization, and
179 income growth are putting a tremendous demand pressure on forests for products and services
180 (Planning Commission's working group on Forests and Natural Resource Management, 2011).

181 The shrinking common property resource base, the rapidly increasing human and livestock
182 population, and poverty are all responsible for the tremendous degradation pressure on the
183 existing forest cover (Planning Commission's working group on Forests and Natural Resource
184 Management, 2011).

185 Although India has a well-articulated forest policy that has evolved over time, forest laws have
186 lagged in translating the policy into an implementable strategy. Even with a well-defined forest
187 policy, India currently lacks a strategy to meet the many diverse demands for forest products and
188 services from the forest sector (Planning Commission's working group on Forests and Natural
189 Resource Management, 2011).

190 An ideal forest strategy for India would provide a balance of all the three policy phases that India
191 has experienced since independence: industrial forestry, social forestry, and
192 protection/regeneration. India has more than 68 million tribal people, a large percentage of
193 whom live close to the forest areas and constitute the most disadvantaged section of society
194 based on per capita income, literacy rates, nutritional and health status, and lack of access to
195 social and technical services (The Hindu, 23rd September, 2017; also see Planning Commission's
196 working group on Forests and Natural Resource Management, 2011).

197 Although India is the seventh-largest country in the world, it holds only 1.8 percent of the
198 world's forests (Planning Commission's working group on Forests and Natural Resource
199 Management, 2011). But the pressures on those forests are extremely high. India's large and
200 rapidly growing human and livestock populations (one billion and 450 million, respectively) are
201 the heaviest contributors to the unabated degradation of India's forest resources (Planning
202 Commission's working group on Forests and Natural Resource Management, 2011). India also
203 has the largest number of poor in the world, many of whom depend directly or indirectly on the
204 country's forest resources for a living (Planning Commission's working group on Forests and

205 Natural Resource Management, 2011). Shrinking common property resource areas, which
206 declined by 30 to 50 percent between 1950 and 1980 (WRI 1994), also contributed to increased
207 pressure on the forests by the landless. Add to these factors the country's steady increase in
208 demand for industrial wood products, and one would expect to see a rapid decline in India's
209 forest resources.

210 Forests are an important gift of nature for the well being of the mankind. Forests constitute some
211 of the richest natural resources. In India, a large section of population still depends on forest for
212 their existence. The forest cover of India as per the present assessment (FSI, 2003) is 678,333 km
213 and this constituting 20.64 per cent of the geographical area of the country. A large section of the
214 rural population living below the poverty line mainly depends on forest for their livelihood. It
215 was estimated that 100 million people in the country who live in and around forests and for
216 another 275 million for whom forests constitute an important source of livelihood (Planning
217 Commission's working group on Forests and Natural Resource Management, 2011). Poverty in
218 rural India is generally linked to inadequate arable land or its low productivity (Rai and Soni
219 2018). Naturally, in the case of weaker sections, that too in the absence of land, forest related
220 livelihoods become important (Rai and Soni 2018). Collection from forests such as fuel wood
221 and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) and their contribution to household income in rural
222 areas especially for communities living adjacent to forests largely remains unaccounted and
223 unnoticed. Tribal women are major actors in the forestry sector throughout the developing world.
224 Most widely recognised is that women (and children) are the primary collectors of fuel and
225 fodder for home consumption and for sale in urban markets. This alone gives women a major
226 role in the management and conservation of these forest resources.

227

228 **4. DISPLACEMENTS OF THE TRIBALS IN THE NAME OF DEVELOPMENT**

229 Displacement of tribal communities in the name of development related projects is one of the
230 major social disruptive processes happening all over the country (Pandit, 2009:33; Rai and Soni
231 2018). Adivasis constitute some 8% of India's population, but 40 % of the 20 to 30 million
232 people that have been displaced by large dams since independence (Whiteland, 2003; cited in
233 Nilsen, 2017). It is an irony that these people, who are displaced do get 'no' or the 'least'

234 benefits of these developmental activities (Cernea 2015). Contrary to this, their living conditions
235 deteriorate as a result of this displacement (Rai and Soni 2018). The record of the Indian state on
236 resettlement and rehabilitation of people who have lost their livelihood, life worlds and habitats
237 to dams and other large scale development projects is dismal, and this is the main reason why
238 development-induced displacement more often than not entails impoverishment (Nilsen,
239 2017:102).

240 The development projects directly benefits other sections of the society. The benefits out of these
241 projects are used by the State, urban and upper classes, landlords, bureaucrats, contractors,
242 engineers, politician, project officers and many others (Kamaal, 2017). The impoverishment of
243 marginal groups such as Adivasi peasants stands in stark contrast to the enrichment of the
244 groups, the capitalist farmers as a result of construction of large dams (Nilsen, 2017:103).

245 In India, estimates of the total number of people displaced due to large dams vary from 16 to 38
246 million people (Cernea 2015). About half of the displaced population constitutes of the tribals
247 (The Hindu, 14th August, 2016). Hirakund Dam (1948-57) the first Dam of India, built on
248 Mahanadi River, was a multipurpose-river valley project in the State of Orissa (Pandit 2009).
249 The dam covered a vast area of 743 Km sq., submerged 249 villages in Sambalpur district and 36
250 villages in Raigarh District (Chattisgarh) (Kujur 2008). The Dam affected about 22,144 families
251 or a population of 1.1 lakh, where the scheduled tribes constituted 18.34% of total number of
252 affected people (Pandit 2009). Another one was Bargi Dam (1974-90) that affected 162 villages
253 in the three districts of Madhya Pradesh- Mandla, Seoni and Jabalpur, out of which 82 villages
254 were completely submerged (Pandit 2009). As per the records, the Dam uprooted 7000 families
255 directly, and the data on indirectly affected families is unknown (Pandit 2009). Out of all the
256 displaced people, tribals constituted 43%. (The Hindu, 14th August, 2016).

257 The recent one was the Sardar Sarovar Dam that displaced more than 2 lakh people in the three
258 States- Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat (Thakkar 1999; Cernea 2015). Over 56% of
259 the population affected was the tribals residing in and around the area acquired. It has displaced
260 more than 45,000 families from 192 villages of Madhya Pradesh, 33 of Maharashtra, and 19 of
261 Gujarat (Pandit 2009). Because of Ib River Dam project in Orissa around 80,000 tribals
262 population have been displaced (Ekka and Asif, 2000:95). The Rukura Dam is another project in

263 Sundergarh where four tribal villages have been displaced (Somayaji et al., 2011). In
264 Chhattisgarh, till date, ten major projects have been completed for which 257,032 acres of land
265 had been acquired and due to these dam projects 238 villages were affected negatively and their
266 rehabilitation had not been achieved yet (Somayaji et al., 2011). Further, another 123 villages
267 have been affected negatively because of 30 medium projects (Somayaji et al., 2011). Another
268 150 villages have been affected negatively because of other 8 medium sized pending projects
269 (Somayaji et al., 2011). In Jharkhand due to Dam related projects, between 1951 to 1990, around
270 16, 400, 000 people have been displaced and out of this 75.2% of the displaced persons were
271 tribals (Ekka and Asif, 2000:25). Out of these displaced people only 4,100,000 people have been
272 rehabilitated and 12,300,000 were left without rehabilitation (Ekka and Asif, 2000:95). Overall,
273 75 % people left without rehabilitation (Ekka and Asif, 2000:95). Similarly, these are some of
274 the other examples of the River Dams and the percentage of tribals displaced among other
275 displaced people- Curzen (Gujrat)- 100%; Maheshwar (M.P.)- 60%; Ichha (Bihar)- 80%;
276 Chandil (Bihar)- 87%; Keolkar (Bihar)- 88%; Mohibajaj Sagar (Rajasthan)- 77%; Polbharam
277 (Andhra Pradesh)- 53%; Upper Indravati (Orissa)- 90%; and Ichhapalli (Himachal Pradesh)-
278 77% (The Report of World Commission, 2000).

279 Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are the three states in India, where there is maximum
280 occurrence of both, the natural resources as well the displacement (Cernea 2015). The threat of
281 the tribals' extinction has had a traumatic past with the establishment of industries in these states
282 (Cernea 2015). In Jharkhand, because of industry related projects around 1,250,000 people have
283 been displaced. Out of these only 3, 75, 000 people have been rehabilitated and 8,75,000 have
284 been left without rehabilitation (Ekka and Asif, 2000:95). Further, in Jharkhand alone 2,550,000
285 have been displaced due to mining related projects and out of these only 630,000 people have
286 been rehabilitated and 1,920,000 were left without rehabilitation (Ekka and Asif, 2000:95).
287 Nearly 29.6 % of those displaced by mining industries are tribals (Ekka and Asif, 2000:95).

288 In Chhattisgarh, in Bastar region alone Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) for an
289 investment of Rs. 17,000 crores were signed in 2005 for the proposed Tata and Essar steel plant
290 (PUCL, 2005a). Prior to these, 8775 new factories were established. Notably most of the
291 industries were established in Raipur and Durg districts (PUCL, 2005a). Also, there were three
292 steel plants set-up in the offing, owned by the Tata, Essar and NDMC which caused major

293 displacement (PUCL, 2005a). The highly debatable issue in the recent time has been Special
294 Economic Zone Act, 2005, the aim of which, Union Government declared was to accelerate
295 industrialization through foreign direct investments (FDI), that would provide employment
296 opportunities to a large number of people (Sharma 2009). But, in reality, SEZ has also become a
297 tool to remove the tribals from their lands. Since last decade, or in post-LPG period, the
298 displacement of tribals and other marginalised groups of people have become an additional
299 source, as economic activity increasingly dispels people their lands and villages (Sharma 2009).

300 In Bastar region of Chhattisgarh, tribals' land has been given to big business houses for mining
301 and other industries (See report of CSE Delhi 2011). Official data suggests that 65,000 ha. land
302 area has already been clear for industrial purpose, and many MoUs have been signed for further
303 clearance. The sum total of MoUs signed in the state of Chhattisgarh alone is 745, the highest in
304 the country (see report of CSE Delhi, 2011). According to a report of Committee on Agrarian
305 Relations¹¹ about 3, 50, 000 tribals, or half the population of Dantewada has been displaced
306 from the district.

307 Displacement deprives of the vital sustenance of the tribal people who are dependent on the land,
308 forests, common property resources (CPR), for their livelihood and finally their long term
309 sustainability is also endangered (Pandit, 2009:10). The displacement alienates them from their
310 forests and lands, the two vital elements for their survival. According to Water Commission on
311 Dam report "despite the massive investment in water resource management and particularly in
312 dams, billions of children, women and men in rural areas lack access to the most basic water and
313 sanitation services" (Sharma 2009). Also, indiscrete industrialisation affects a large number of
314 these people by forcefully removing them from their lands, without ensuring them alternate
315 livelihood options.

316 Various reports and case studies on rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced people, from
317 different evictions sites, suggest that in a large number of cases about 75% of people are never
318 resettled (for e.g. The Hindu, 14th August, 2016). In Orissa, SAIL and the Orissa government
319 have failed to rehabilitate and resettle the evacuees of the last 50 years (Somayaji et al., 2011). It
320 has been observed that non-recognition of tribes over resources and restrictions on their use,
321 alienation of tribes from the means of production, denial of due entitlement of labour, distressed

322 payment of wages, and misappropriation of funds, have kept the tribal labour in the misery and
323 starvation (Pandit, 2009:15).

324 The effect of this is that the tribals feel deceived and disillusioned by the governments, which in
325 turn leads to tribal unrest and uproar, in the form of stikes, rallies, lobbying etc. Narmada
326 Dharangrasta Samiti (Maharashtra), Khedut Mazdoor Sangh (M.P.), ARCH Vahini (Gujrat),
327 Jharkhand Disom Party (Jharkhand) Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti (Orissa),and Bharat Jakat Majhi
328 Pargana Mahal, a collective of some 6.4 million Santhals across West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand,
329 Orissa and Assam, are some of the examples of tribal outfits. Similarly, Maharashtra Rajya
330 Adivasi Bachao Abhiyan and Sarvahara Jan Andolan in Maharashtra; Jai Adivasi Yuva Shakti in
331 Madhya Pradesh; Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and Adivasi Sengel Abhiyan in Jharkhand are the
332 examples of tribal movements (Chaturvedi, P. and Dalal, A. 2008; Pandit, 2009:15).

333 Recently, about two hundred Adivasi villages in Khunti District in Jharkhand have put up stone
334 plaques having provisions of PESA, 2006 inscribed on them at the entrance of villages (Sharma
335 2009). This movement of putting up of stone plaque is called as 'Pathalgadi' or 'Pathalgarhi'
336 movement, which declares that Gram Sabha is the sovereign authority and that the tribals do not
337 recognise Central or State Government, though they abide by the Constitution of India (Rai and
338 Soni 2018). Also, recently the Dongriya Kondh tribe of Niyamgiri hills in Orissa have won the
339 legal battle against the Vedanta group, and saved their "Niyam Raja" the mountain rich in
340 bauxite resources, which the Vedanta group wanted to acquire for mining purposes (Rai and Soni
341 2018).

342 **5. TRIBAL INCLUSION THROUGH PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE**

343 What then are the elements of a vision of development much more inclusive and empowering of
344 those left out? First, the overall direction of growth needs to change. We cannot continue with a
345 pattern of jobless growth. It is clear that some models of growth are inherently more inclusive
346 than others, which is why our focus should be not just on GDP growth itself, but on achieving a
347 growth process that is as inclusive as possible (The Hindu, 21st April 2016). For example, faster
348 growth for the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises segment will generate a much broader
349 spread of employment and income earning opportunities and is, therefore, more inclusive than
350 growth largely driven by extractive industries or the service sector (The Hindu, 21st April 2016).

351 It is also clear that sustainability has to be at the core of our development strategy. This is
352 because the poorest regions of India are also the most eco-fragile (The Hindu, 21st April 2016). If
353 we truly want to build tribal incomes, we need to offer them a range of sustainable livelihoods,
354 including non-pesticide managed agriculture, an imperative also for the health of Indian
355 consumers, as well as for reducing the escalating financial and ecological costs of farming.

356 Huge income-generation and biodiversity conservation possibilities also exist if we can
357 imaginatively utilize the vast unutilized potential of the Non-Timber Forest Products market,
358 which is estimated to run into several thousands of crores, of which only a minuscule fraction
359 accrues to the tribal communities. Of course, this requires careful attention being paid to the
360 rights of the tribal people, as enshrined in the Forest Rights Act and a complete restructuring of
361 their relationship with the Forest Department, historically seen by the tribal communities as
362 standing in an adversarial relationship with them.

363 Much better state capacities in regions of high poverty are also an urgent requirement. For these
364 regions suffer not just from rampant market failure but also widespread government failure. A
365 crucial reason why the poor are unable to take advantage of the possibilities opened up by
366 growth even within their districts is the absence of requisite health and education facilities.
367 Globally, India spends among the lowest share of its national income on public provision of
368 health and education (The Hindu, 21st April 2016). These are the sectors in most urgent need of
369 government reform. We need to equip our most disadvantaged people with the skills demanded
370 by a rapidly changing economy. Programmes meant for poverty elimination such as the
371 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) do not work as they
372 are meant to because the requisite human resources do not exist precisely where these
373 programmes are most desperately required.

374 A key feature of the changing economy is growing market penetration. More than 80 per cent of
375 India's cultivators are small and marginal farmers and they are invariably helpless victims of
376 participation in the market economy. But this need not necessarily be so. Wherever farmers have
377 come together to form powerful institutions to buy and sell, they have been able to compete on
378 much fairer terms in the market.

379 Most of all, the excluded regions and people need better governance, which is much more
380 participatory in nature, for only then will the slogan of cooperative federalism really acquire
381 concrete substance. Panchayati raj institutions, including the gram sabha, need to be empowered
382 and activated for this purpose. We need to learn to involve the “last citizens” in decisions that
383 affect their lives, such as taking their consent while acquiring land for an avowed public purpose.

384 There is nothing automatic about a decline in inequality under capitalism. The Kuznets Curve
385 remains a mere fantasy if the right programmes and policies are not in place (The Hindu, 23rd
386 September, 2017). Inequality did decline when the appropriate policy framework was adopted in
387 Europe and America during the so-called golden age of capitalism in the mid-20th century.
388 These were the decades that saw the emergence of what economist, public official and diplomat
389 John Kenneth Galbraith termed “countervailing power” (The Hindu, 23rd September, 2017). And
390 it is the unravelling of this balancing power and a shift towards free-market fundamentalism that
391 led to the rise in inequality after 1980 (The Hindu, 23rd September, 2017).

392 Indian policymakers must recognise the urgent need to redefine the very meaning of reforms so
393 as to make them pro-poor, rather than merely pro-corporate. Without these reforms, inequality in
394 India will continue to escalate and create dangerous tensions, threatening the very survival of the
395 delicate fabric of Indian democracy.

396

397 **6. CONCLUSION**

398 Indian planning history suggests that in the planning process the spirit of the Constitution has
399 been betrayed – people are not partners in the decision making process of development projects,
400 specifically regarding the construction of dams, environment impact, cost-benefit analysis,
401 allocation of resources, displacement and rehabilitation. In India these are considered to be the
402 domain of the administration. But, the development should be more ‘people-oriented’ (Baxi,
403 1997:166) and more ‘participatory’ in character. The forceful displacement is always
404 problematic, as the consequent human dislocation is much too high. These people lose their
405 homes, shelter and lands in the process of displacement and this displacement induces their
406 further marginalisation, mostly due to poor resettlement and rehabilitation policies. Historically,
407 the tribes have been the most vulnerable section of Indian society. Keeping in mind the

408 vulnerability of tribes, the makers of the Constitution guaranteed these people some special
409 provisions. Despite the constitutional and other safeguards, the state has not taken proper steps to
410 improve the socio-economic conditions of these people. Rather, the State in the guise of
411 ‘development’ has led to their further marginalisation, which is displacement-induced.

412 Land is sacred to the tribals because it is the only resource they have for their subsistence
413 (Somayaji et al., 2011). About 70% of India’s population, many of whom are tribals, primarily
414 depend on land-related work and agricultural production (Kujur, 2008). Alienation of land and
415 forced displacement, have threatened the livelihood of millions. Also, the reason behind the mass
416 protest by the tribals is alienating them from their lands, as the alienation snaps the ‘eternalbond’
417 between nature and tribals (Rai and Soni 2018).

418 As per the objective of Forest Rights Act, ‘the recognised rights of the forest dwelling scheduled
419 tribes include the responsibilities and authority for sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity,
420 maintenance of ecological balance and thereby strengthening the conservation regime of the
421 forests while ensuring livelihood and food security of forest dwelling tribes’. The state, by
422 breaking the ‘nature-tribal’ bond, also threatens the nature and its resource conservation. Lastly,
423 it goes undisputed that the tribals have been the ‘guards’ and ‘protectors’ the forest and its
424 resources; hence, they need to be protected for the survival of both- the tribals and forests.

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