

Development Induced Displacement and Marginalisation: Understanding the Indian Experience

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Abstract

Development projects which involve displacement of concerned people are increasingly launched in India leading to their marginalisation because of loss of their permanent livelihood –land, forest, and river. In addition, the displaced people lose their traditional home, occupation, and culture. On the basis of the secondary data, this paper examines the issue of marginalisation in India and finds that the gap between the policy and implementation; displaced people's inability to make proper use of whatever compensation received; their low level of education and awareness; delay in the award of the compensation; award of inadequate compensation; lack of collective bargaining capacity have resulted in the marginalisation of these people. However, the Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Act 2013 holds promises and the judicial intervention in the implementation of LARR Act 2013 on the subject relates to displacees. The paper suggests that while development programmes cannot be abandoned in the National development agenda, the efforts are to be made ensuring effective implementation of the legal framework in place to safeguard the interest of the displaced.

Keywords: Development, Displacement, Marginalisation, LARR Act 2013

1.0 Introduction

The task of promoting development was entrusted to the state after independence under Nehruvian model of development emphasising on modernising projects like industrialisation, power, roads and ports, dams, mines, etc. A new model of development was adopted in India after 1991 under New Economic Policy (NEP) influenced by Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation (LPG). Multi-national Companies (MNCs) were encouraged to establish industrial, trade, and commercial units with government cooperation and patronage. The LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation) model of development imposed by the developed nations on the developing and

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underdeveloped countries through the structural adjustment policies (SAP) unleashed the rolling back of the state ushering an era of capitalist economy and industrial society. As a result, the developing societies witnessed unprecedented flow of foreign direct investment (FDI), large scale disinvestment, dominance of MNCs and state policies circumscribed by the dictates of the macro level economic entities like World Bank, World Trade Organisations (WTO) producing a far reaching repercussions not only on economy in terms of job, employment, occupation, but also on politics and society at large. An important fall out of such policies is the implementation of a large number of development projects in the country. Millions of the hectares of land were acquired from the land holders. The land acquisition is justified on the ground of faster development in the country through the construction of dams, roads, industries and factories. The research question raised here is that whether the new economic policy adopted since 1991 promotes equitable development goals? Whether interest of all the sections of the society including SCs, STs, women, poor farmers, labour class are taken care of in such model of development or these classes have been marginalised in the process? Whether the interest of the displaced population has been taken care of properly by Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) policies governing displacement? Whether the existing legal framework is effective to address the issue of marginalisation? The present research paper assesses the impact of the development led displacement and consequent marginalisation in the country on the basis of secondary sources to address some of the above issues.

2.0 Marginalisation and Displacement

According to UN guiding principles on Internal Displacement ‘Internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border’ (UNs 2004 quoted in Negi et al. 2011:6). India has invested in industrial projects, dams, roads, mines, power plants, and new cities to achieve rapid economic growth. Available reports indicate that more than 21 million people are Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs) due to development projects in India. They have been pushed to the margin of development due to implementation of projects of development!

Marginalisation refers to deterioration in the social status and psychological attitudes of an individual or community. Marginalisation does not confine to loss of material resources only. It goes beyond economic loss and includes psychological aspect of a person and community resulting from displacement from a location. Displacement forces the community to struggle to adjust themselves with the people of another community having a different culture and to internalise the value system of the new society that does not recognise their own economy and culture. This leads to the development of a sense of helplessness and powerlessness among the people displaced. As a result, their material and social status as well as psychological attitudes deteriorate leading to their marginalisation. Therefore, while assessing the marginalisation of a community, there is a need to go to cultural, social, psychological, and health parameters

beyond economic aspects. The components of the informal economy and non-economic ones like social disintegration, dispossession and its impact on their health need to be assessed. So, though most speak of R&R policies, one has to keep a distinction between resettlement and rehabilitation. This distinction is essential because a major cause of impoverishment and marginalisation is the failure to rehabilitate the people even when they are resettled.

2.1 Data on Displacement

The most developmental projects have always been the forest resources, river systems, and mineral base which have displaced millions. Moreover, many developmental projects have taken place in the most backward areas with predominantly dwelled by tribals. The Indian tribes are believed to be the indigenous settlers in India. They are usually called as *Adivasis* implying original inhabitants. The constitution of India has documented these tribal groups as Scheduled Tribes (STs). As per the Census of India 2011, ST population is 8.6% of India's population. However, more than 40 per cent of the development induced displacement is tribal population in India. In India around 50 million people have been displaced due to development projects by the year 2000. By the same year, around 21.3 million development-induced Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) include those displaced by dams (16.4 million), mines (2.55 million), industrial development (1.25 million), and wild life sanctuaries and national parks (0.6 million) (IDMC 2007 quoted in Negi et al. 2011:6). Table 1 shows the data on displaced families in India by the year 2000.

Table No.1. Overview of development projects and displacement in India (by year 2000)

Category of Projects	No of displaced families	Percentage of displaced families
Mines	40 lakh	14.04%
Industries	20 lakh	07.02%
Dams	200 lakh	70.18%
Sanctuary	10 lakh	03.50%
Others	15 lakh	05.26%
Total	285 lakh	100%

Source: Collected from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute, Odisha

Table no 2 shows the total number of Displaced Populations, Partially Affected Populations due to commencement of various development projects during 1947-2000 in Northeast India.

Apart from this there are some data of displacement on various development projects in various states in the country which is mentioned below:

According to a government data, 2.5 lakh people were displaced by the Narmada dam. Out of this figure, 50% are tribals from Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat (Parsai 2017).

Table No. 2. Overview of development projects and displacement in Northeast India (1947-2000)

Category	Number of DPs &PAPs displaced	Percentage
Water resources	4,48,812	23.51
industry	57,732	3.02
Mines	41,200	2.16
Non-hydel power	7,400	0.39
Defense & Security	50,420	2.64
Environment protection	2,65,409	13.09
Transport & communication	1,50,762	7.93
Refugee resettlement	2,83,500	14.85
Others	5,95,593	31.25
Total	19,00,828	100

Source: Fernandes and Bharali (2010:76)

A government calculation assessed that the number of houses to be submerged in the village of Sulgaon to be 196. In reality the village had over 400 houses (Kala 2001). Thus there was wrong calculation on the supposed displaced people. In addition, the resettlement plan only considers landed families. However, those depending on sand quarrying, fishing (*Kahars*), ferrying (*Kevats*) etc. were not taken care of in the rehabilitation programme. An approximate number of 8000 families lost livelihoods without compensation (Roy 1999).

The Tehri project is a multi-purpose irrigation and power project in the Ganges valley, 250 km north of Delhi, located in the Tehri Garhwal district. Initially in 1969, the Tehri Dam Project Organisation (TDPO) estimated that about 13,413 persons were to be affected by the construction of the dam. But a working group for the Environment Appraisal of Tehri Dam established in 1979 put the figure to 85,600 persons. But other estimates show that around 100,000 rural individuals were displaced (Rao 1988 and Newton 2008). According to an official data, in Old Tehri, 5,291 families were displaced due to the construction of Tehri dam. However, according to another data source, a total of 10,303 families living in Old Tehri and were displaced (Dhasmana 2002 and Reddy 2016). Thus it is clear that there is no reliable data on the displaced people and partially affected people. This is a serious issue. Without proper calculation of the data on Displaced Persons (DP)/Partially Affected Persons (PAP), the determination and conferment of the R&R package is extremely difficult. It means many DP/PAP are outside the R&R package. It is gross violation of their human rights. Bargi dam in Madhya Pradesh displaced around 114,000 people from 162 villages without any prior notice (Desai 1993). They did not receive proper compensation either.

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According to Indian Social Institute, Delhi there are 21.3 million development-induced displacement in India.

2.2 Dalit and Tribe Component of Displacement

In table 3 it can be seen that the percentage of tribals and dalits displaced were 29.15% and 16.01% respectively in some states in India.

Table No. 3. Caste-Tribe of DP/PAPs from Some States

State	Tribals	%	Dalits	%	Others	%	NA	%	Total
Andhra	1032415	21	943147	19.19	2095443	42.63	830529	17.17	4901534
Assam	416321	21.70	NA	NA	609015	31.74	893538	46.57	1918874
Goa	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1110041	100	1110041
Gujarat	1821283	44.43	462626	11.29	1791142	43.70	23818	0.58	4098869
Jharkhand	620372	40.08	212892	13.75	676575	43.71	38178	02.47	1548017
Kerala	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	552233	100	552233
Orissa	616116	40.38	178442	11.64	671351	48.01	0	0	1465909
Meghalaya	136026	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	136026
Mizoram	222692	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	222692
Nagaland	60516	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	60516
Sikkim	33871	39.51	1990	2.32	33173	38.70	16683	19.46	85717
Tripura	100624	56.17	17320	9.67	19092	10.66	42114	23.51	179150
West Bengal	1330663	19.16	1689607	24.33	2566223	36.95	1357999	19.55	6944492
Total	6390899	27.52	3506024	15.10	8462014	36.44	3865133	16.64	2224070

Source: Fernandes (2021:11)

Table No. 4. Resettlement Percentage of DPs in India

State	DPs	Resettled	%
Andhra	2358274	440090	18.66
Assam	307024	11000	03.59
Goa	35897	8375	23.31
Gujarat	690322	164498	23.82
Kerala	219633	30036	13.68
Meghalaya	38973	1000	2.57
Mizoram	191406	7371	3.85
Nagaland	604	00	00
Sikkim	32856	00	00
Tripura	97944	3996	23.33
Odisha	548794	192840	35.27
W. Bengal	3634271	400000	4.08
Total	8155998	1259206	15.44

Source: Fernandes (2021:14)

Although the tribal population only makes up 8.6% of the total Indian population, more than 40 per cent of the development induced displaced are tribal peoples in India. According to one estimate (Nag 2002: 40) 15% of the world’s large dams 1947-1979 were built in India. Today the country has over 4,000 of them. These projects brought about irreversible changes in land use and in the lives of millions of its dependants. The replacement percentage of DPs showed in table 4 points to the intensity of the problem.

2.3 Consequences of Development-induced displacement

Several studies have found that the quality of life and potential for physical and emotional growth has been dormant; family and community life is almost totally destroyed; the opportunity for cultural activity hardly exists. Basic health care for all and education of children are virtually non-existent. Their right to participate and contest in the political processes is difficult. Cernea (1996) writes, ‘Like becoming a refugee, being forcibly ousted from one’s land and habitat by a dam, reservoir or highway is not only immediately disruptive and painful, it is also fraught with serious long-term risks of becoming poorer than before displacement, more vulnerable economically and disintegrated socially’. It is a profound socio-economic and cultural disruption for those affected. Dislocation breaks up living patterns and social continuity. It dismantles existing modes of production, disrupts social networks, causes the impoverishment of many of those uprooted, threatens their cultural identity, and increases the risks of epidemics and health problems (Cernea, 1995). Parasuraman (1997) describes the vulnerabilities of women when displaced which includes loss of access to traditional sources of livelihood — land, forest, sea, river, pasture, cattle or saltpan land — marginalizes women on the labour market. Women not only suffered in terms of health and nutrition, they also lost the capacity to provide a secure future for their children in terms their children education, health care etc.

Consequences like landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, lack of access to common property and community service, social disintegration, and violation of human rights are reported in development induced displacement (Negi et al. 2011).

3.0 Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation

Following table shows the period wise policy packages on R&R in India.

Table No. 5. Evolution of Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) Policy in India

Sl no	Policy/Act	Highlights	Outcome/Analysis
1	The primary Land Acquisition Act, 1894	Non consultative, non-transparent, low compensation, no proper grievance redressal mechanism, compensation was basically land based R&R for the projects between	Massive land alienation from people making them landless and poor. Cash compensation was not adequate; in many cases cash awardees lost cash because of their poor financial knowledge

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		1973-80 and cash doll based for projects between 1980-94	
4	National Rehabilitation Policy for Project affected Families (NPRR 2004)	R&R became liberal and definition of DP extended to included PAP for assistance. It meant to safeguard the interests of resource-poor landless agricultural labourers, forest dwellers, artisans and <i>adivasi</i> groups	There was no provisions to consult land owners and there was no improvement on the status of landless
5	National R&R Policy 2006	R&R becomes progressive; stresses on participatory planning and implementation. Efforts are made to improvise the earlier policy, R&R package to be applicable if 400 families & more en masse in plain areas and 200 families & more en masse in hilly areas are displaced	it remained as a set of guidelines on Development induced displacement and lacked legal framework to implement the provisions, the concepts like the Tribal Resettlement Plan, lacked comprehensive description, problematic as fixing 400 families in plain areas and 200 in hill areas for R&R package to be applicable
7	The Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Act 2013	No land use shall be permitted if rehabilitation and resettlement is not complied with in full, social impact assessment, consent of families (70-80%),, market rate price of land for compensation, additional relief for SC/ST, restriction on fertile land, dispute resolution mechanism, no land acquisition for private purpose, determination of market value on a specified formula amounting to more than four times of the original land value	The Court verdicts on various land acquisition cases lie Land Acquisition Officer, A.P. v Rabi Santosh Reddy (2017), Balarishnan V UOI 2017), G. Padmanabhan and Others v., Tamil Nadu State and Others (2015) the famous Tata Singur Case and the Nandi Gram Land Grab case in West Bengal reveal that the LARR Act 2013 has been effectively implemented to protect interest of the farmers/land owners. However some activists state that compensation amount is not sufficient considering the low market price of the land in rural areas and another drawback of the act is that the people affected by any project are not considered at all in the act (The court verdicts mentioned here are quoted in Tiwari 2022).

3.1 *The bottlenecks of the R&R Policies in India*

Table No 5 mentions various policies on R&R in India highlighting their components and impacts/outcomes. It can be found that the earlier R&R policy before the LARR Act 2013 was not effective due to various reasons. One among those reasons was the absence of human face in settling the compensation package to the displaced persons. The land losers had to go through a series of psychological and socio-cultural trauma and they were losing a lot financially.

Another drawback was the policy-implementation gap. Due to the construction of Tehri dam reservoir, 125 Himalayan villages were affected, out of which 37 villages were completely flooded, and 88 of the villages were partially flooded (Reddy 2016). Total number of families' properties submerged in water is 5429. According to a report, the cash compensation paid to these families were inadequate and most of the villagers displaced were not a resettlement option and the families whose properties were partially submerged did not get resettlement offer. To a total number of 3,810 families whose properties were partially submerged, the government did not offer resettlement options. Those families were simply paid a cash equivalent of their land that had been flooded (Reddy 2016).

Many people displaced more than 20 years back are still waiting for compensation. Some have already died. Some are demanding for compensation through demonstrations and memorandums.

The process of addressing the land acquisition and settlement of compensation was non-participatory. The participation of the beneficiaries was limited and settlement was one sided. The displaced and partially displaced were not consulted and were given little time before implementation of project. There was not proper accountable mechanism in the process. Prior information regarding information was not properly given. In case of Bargi and Narmada project 70,000 villagers were informed that they would be displaced. But in reality 1,14,000 people were displaced (Roy 1999).

Apart from that there was not an advance and comprehensive planning for resettlement. The laws and policies in place were not provided any legal parameter in favour of the displaced people to safeguard their interests. In many cases, whatever monetary compensation the land losers were getting were soon losing them as they were unable to handle cash compensation effectively and economically due to low education and addiction to liquor like bad habits to ensure their survival after losing land. Those depended on agriculture and still wanted to depend on agriculture after displacement did not get alternative cultivable land leading to their economic marginalisation. The displaced people had to undergo a painful period before they were relocated somewhere. The displacement and initiation of projects has witnessed violence and loss of life of those who protest the project initiation. On 5 October 2011, the police and security forces fired at people in Roing town of Lower Dibang Valley district, Arunachal Pradesh resulting hospitalisation of nine students. The protest was against the construction of dams for power generation (Hindustan Times, 09 January 2012). Similarly, Kalinganagar

police firing in Odisha in the year 2006 killed 11 tribals (Newslick 2006). Further, 04 activists of POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS), an organisation fighting against land acquisition for projects were killed when a bomb exploded in Patana village, Dhenkia, Jagatsinghpur district of Odisha on 03 March 2013 (The Hindu, 03March 2013). POSCO is a Korean steel company invited to set up a steel plant in the same location of Odisha. On 14 March 2007, 14 villagers were killed by police for protesting against land acquisition in Nandigram, West Bengal (Frontline 2007). Similarly 02 people died because of police firing while protesting against power project at Bhangar, West Bengal on 18 January 2017 (Hindustan Times, 18 January 2017). There are many incidents of violence in different parts of the country of police firing against protesters who protested land acquisition for projects.

3.2 *Destruction of the culture of the displaced*

The life style of the tribal people and that of the people living in plain areas are different. Tribal people lead their life in a traditional way. They depend on land, forest, and river for their livelihood. Their culture and tradition is built on the land, forest, river, and mountain. These people do not require money at the cost of land, forest, river, and mountain. These people use the land for cultivation collectively and do not have legally defined ownership. When compensation is paid to those displaced from their traditional land they are victimised not only due to the loss of their traditional land but also because of their inability to produce evidence of their ownership of the property they have been depending since time immemorial. In some cases the victims of the displacement became the victim of the land mafias.

Moreover, land is seen as inalienable resource for the livelihoods of the tribal people. Apart from providing them with sustainable livelihood, the land also provides them with freedom to work independently according to their needs. The tribal people generally cultivate both plain and hill lands to grow different crops. Land is a very important and crucial aspect of tribal life and their culture. Land is the basis for the formation of their culture, economy, society, and their polity. To quote one tribal woman Bulka Miniaka in Odisha,

‘Our life, culture, and employment everything revolves around the soil...In the month of Asadha (signifying the rainy season) we have Kulimaruparba, we get the root of the crop home and worship it. In the month of Bhoda (the following month (sic)) we worship maize.... From making the plough to agriculture work, we do everything together. So there is peace in our village. But once industrialisation starts, our festivals will vanish and our region will be destroyed... We will get jobs, but who will do the cultivation? People will eat money or what? We cultivate; therefore we eat’ (Quoted in Srikant 2009:4).

4.0 Conclusion

Development induced displacement is a complex problem which affects multiple aspects of flora and fauna – the environment, tribal and village communities and urban areas as

well. Development led displacement is a serious issue as it involves the life, livelihood, culture and identity of a community. The data on displacement indicates the magnitude of the issue. The construction of dams, national highways, industries, etc. caused large scale displacement of many. Compensation for the displaced was not sufficient. The data mentioned in the preceding portions in this paper indicates that most the tribal and dalit population were displaced from their ancestral land and their resettlement and rehabilitation was far from satisfactory. The large scale marginalisation has led to their marginalisation. It has been found that the era of LPG has witnessed commencement of unprecedented displacement due to thousands of projects. The policies addressing the grievances of the displaced population have been evolving from time to time. The policies made in recent time especially The Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Act 2013 which was implemented from 01 January 2014 is an improvement over the previous policies in terms of compensation to the victims of displacement. The Act also provides for a participatory, consultative and humanitarian approach to deal with the cases of displacement. The efforts must be taken to ensure the speedy redressal of the grievances, effective implementation of the policies, and influence of the land mafias in the determination and conferment of the RR packages to the displaced. The process should be faster and people friendly. The commencement of the project must precede the socio-cultural and economic assessment and must involve the beneficiaries in a democratic and discursive manner. In a democratic set up while fulfilling the majority requirement, minority and marginalised cannot be ignored.

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